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FRANCE 98

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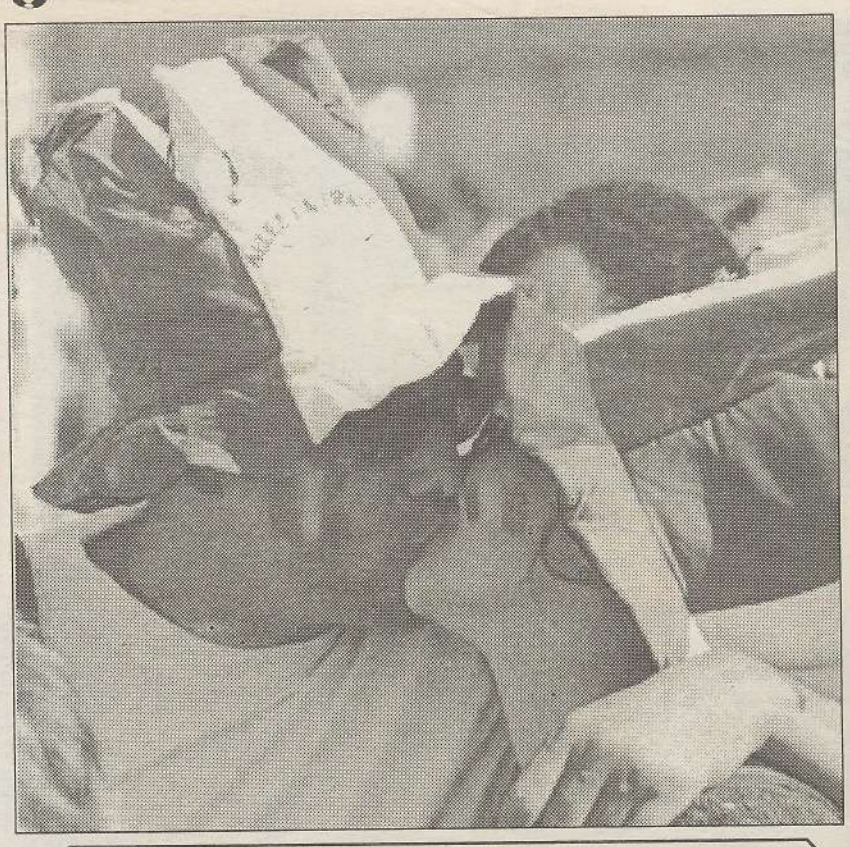

Kiss France 98 bye with our special edition

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EDITOR: .....Aidan Ormond
DESIGN MANAGER.....Andrew Akratos
LAYOUT/TYPESETTING: .....Mary Quartly
.....Joanne El-Lakkis, Alamita Vea
SCANDESK:.....Alex Siafakas
COLOUR SCANS:... .....Bill Hawthorne

CORRESPONDENTS
MELBOURNE: .....Dwyght Tuffnell
QUEENSLAND:.....Glenn Davis
WOLLONGONG: .....Phil Murphy
WESTERN AUSTRALIA:.....Richard Kreider
WOMEN'S CORRESPONDENT:Janene Mar
CONTRIBUTING WRITERS:....Stuart Jones Andrew Akratos, Mark Fowler, Roy Hay, Joe Russo, Mark Stavroulakis, Daryl Katz.
STAFF REPORTER:.....John Economos

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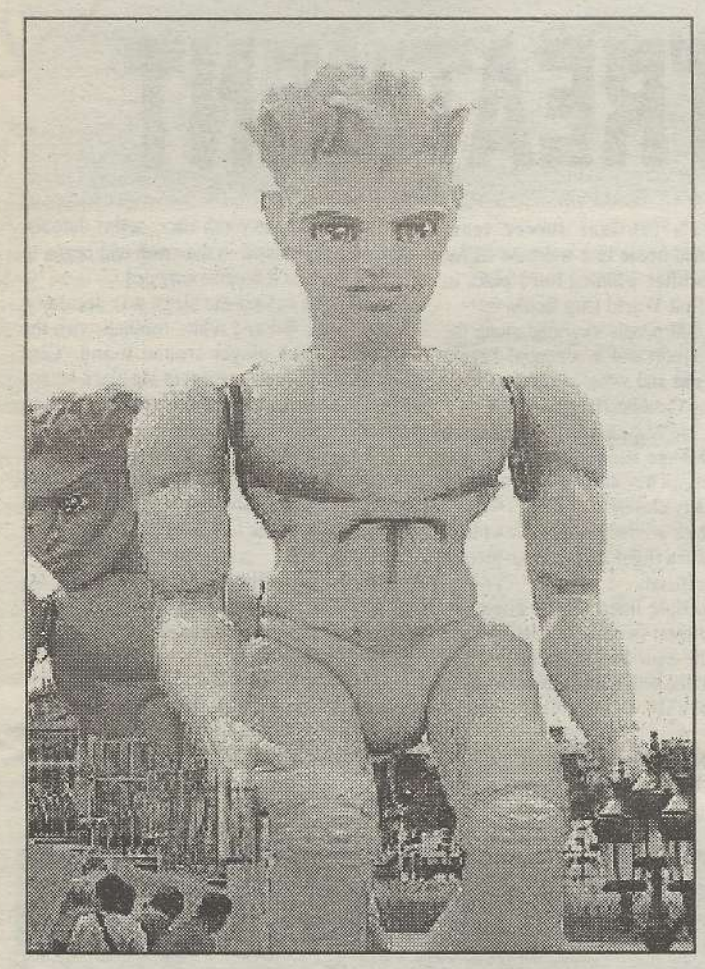
FRANCE 98 PURE THEATRE

LES MURRAY DIRECT FROM FRANCE 98

Even the best theatre has its critics. The 1998 World Cup, as much a piece of theatre as sport can be, has not had the best of reviews everywhere. And I speak not of the little so-called columnists in Australia who know nothing about World Cups and who have strived over the past month to belittle this tournament because its greatness threatens their credibility and therefore their jobs.

Of much more significance is what is being said by European commentators, some of whom have already slammed this World Cup as immemorable, the 'Cup of shame', to be remembered for blatant cheating by players, indecisive refereeing, ticket scandals and general FIFA maladministration.



I beg to differ. No World Cup is perfect, ever has been or ever will be. It is, after all played, coached, refereed and organised by humans. Cheating or attempts at it has been common because it (mainly diving) was a first reaction to the new edicts against tackles from behind.

The refereeing, though not forgivable, can also be put down to the new edicts which, to be fair, should have been introduced a lot earlier. As for tickets and administration, well for an event as huge as this, which attracts and audience of 40 billion even before the final, what do we really expect?

For me the positives truly outweigh the negatives, for this World Cup, in human terms, has at least flirted with magnificence. One had to be here in Paris to experience, for example, the astounding impact the Cup has had on a nation notorious for its indifference to football.

Colleague Johnny Warren and I were caught in the midst of the French multitudes on the Champs Elysees after the country's semi-final win. Such spontaneous, collective passion had to be experienced to be believed. I for one would never have believed it was possible in France. Rio, Naples, Athens, even Manchester, yes. But Paris?

The ugly but small blots of hooliganism ought to be shaded by the spirit of sporting togetherness by rival sets of fans. Away from the bustle of the Champs, Warren and I took refuge in a cafe swarming with singing and chanting French fans. Suddenly a half a dozen Croatian fans walked in, fully clad in their red and white checks.

The French fans all stood and applauded them in. It was an astonishingly real contrast to the image that has been cultivated elsewhere for football as a game for yobs, obsessive crazies and the maladjusted.

Many have bemoaned the fact that this World Cup has not produced a 'truly great team', one that dominates the tournament and leaps out of the record books. But which World Cup has?

In my memory perhaps the West German team of 1974 can be labelled as the last such entity. That's 24 years and six World Cups ago. No, what we had here was a World Cup of immense professional competitiveness, vintage 90s, and all the warts of it including some fabulous technical accomplishments.

If there has been one flop in this tournament it has been the coaching. Collectively the coaches failed and failed big time. Almost to a man they had it wrong, especially with their selections driven by predictable negativity and caution. Only Holland's Hiddink, Denmark's Johansson and Morocco's Michel can be excluded from that lot. The others, most notably England's Hoddle, Italy's Maldini and Germany's Vogts, were generally guilty of graceless conservatism, of selecting reliable, honest workers ahead of creative and inventive match-winners.

They failed and they deserved to fail.

But overall France 98 has been the magnificent football theatre it always promised to be. Frankly, as the audience levels proved, the World Cup is now so huge that whether it is memorable in comparison to others, whether or not it pleases the nostalgia industry, is hardly relevant.

Forty billion or more, after all, can't be wrong.

ROBBIE SLATER SIGNS

By John Economos

Robbie Slater, former Australian international right wingback, is the Northern Spirit's latest signing. Head coach and former international striker Graham Arnold, disclosed on the weekend that his latest signing would also be installed as Spirit's inaugural captain in the Ericsson Cup.

A former St George teenager, Slater departed Australia 10 years ago to embark on a full-time career in Europe.

Since leaving his last Australian club Sydney United back in 1989, the flying right winger first landed in Belgium but failed to crack a contract with Anderlecht.

From Belgium Slater went across to France where he snared a contract with Lens.

Three years later Slater surprisingly made a move to Kenny Dalglish's Blackburn Rovers for a season before being released to West Ham for another season.

In 1997 Slater joined the fabulous England international Matthew Le Tissier at Southampton before finally moving once again to join England Division One side Wolverhampton six months ago.

Last week the 33 year old Slater was granted a free clearance by the Wolves enabling him to sign for the Spirit.

Meanwhile in other news concerning Spirit, it's believed that manager-player Arnold is desperately trying to sign former Rangers and Scotland international Ally McCoist.

Since retiring from Rangers just before the World Cup it's believed that McCoist is seriously considering a lucrative offer to join Scottish Division One side Raith Rovers, who last season finished third. More Spirit news on page 7.

Robbie Slater: Latest signing for Spirit.

Marconi Fairfield Youth League Trials

AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL SOCCER LEAGUE

Paul Okon (Lazio / ITALY & Socceroos) — Steve Corica (Wolverhampton / ENGLAND & Socceroos) Mark Schwarzer (Middlesbrough / ENGLAND & Socceroos). Just a few of the long list of players that started their illustrious football careers at Marconi.

The next wave of Australian Soccer talent is being groomed now and the opportunity to be a part of this action is solely up to you. The Marconi Fairfield National Youth League team trials will be conducted on the following dates.

In order to best diagnose your potential, please note your Year of Birth Trial Time when attending.

DAY	DATE	YEAR OF BIRTH	TRIAL TIME
MONDAY	3 August, 1998	1981 and 1982	6.00pm
		1979 and 1980	8.00pm
WEDNESDAY	5 August, 1998	1981 and 1982	6.00pm
		1979 and 1980	8.00pm
FRIDAY	7 August, 1998	1981 and 1982	6.00pm
		1979 and 1980	8.00pm

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For further information, contact the Marconi Soccer Office on 9823 2222

LATEST NEWS

Compiled by ABSW

ZAGALLO LASHES OUT AT MEDIA

Is this the end for two of the greats of world football? Brazil's captain Dunga bowed out of international soccer after the World Cup final Monday our time and veteran coach Mario Zagallo looks set to follow him.

Dunga, a 34-year-old instantly recognisable by his almost permanent snarl and a spiky haircut designed to make him look aggressive, announced during the competition that he would stop playing for the national team after the World Cup.

Zagallo, who is in his third stint in charge, is still officially the coach but, with his 67th birthday coming up in August, it is expected that the Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF) will bring in fresh blood.

He may be moved upstairs to act as a guide for a younger coach. "I would like to continue but let's wait and see what happens," he said.

Dunga, who missed the chance to become the first man to lift the trophy for a second time after captaining Brazil's triumphant team in 1994, brought down the curtain on a 89-cap career which began against England in 1987.

He played in the 1990 World Cup but was made the scapegoat for Brazil's disappointing performance after they were knocked out in the second round. He did not play again until 1993.

"We've won once and reached one final in the last eight years. We hadn't been to a final in the previous 24. Football is won on small details," were his parting words.

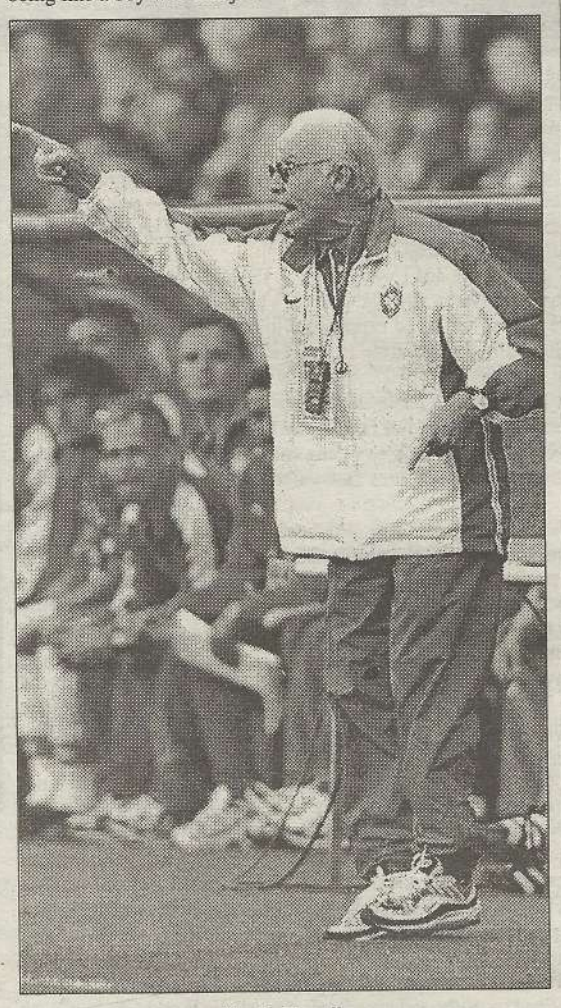
Zagallo, who after his 1970 triumph could have become the first man to win two World Cups as coach, embraced rival trainer Aime Jacquet in a gesture of high sportsmanship.

But shortly afterwards he launched into a furious outburst at a Brazilian journalist, confirming his unpredictable reputation.

"I'm here because I am a man. I have the morale dignity to come up here and talk," he said after being asked a question he considered offensive. "I'm trying to keep this conversation at a high level but you're trying to lower it. You (plural) owe me a lot."

Although the CBF may choose to look for a younger man, they are unlikely to find one with more enthusiasm.

Zagallo, who also won two World Cups as a player and one as assistant coach, talks about the game and his country with a passion rare in other coaches and describes himself as being like a boy who had just started his career.



Mario Zagallo

CROATIA GETS POP STAR TREATMENT

Croatia's jubilant soccer team returned home to a welcome fit for heroes after winning third place in their first World Cup finals.

At least 100,000 people swarmed along the route from the airport and in a central Zagreb square, clad in red and white chequered team shirts and waving Croatian flags.

"Fiery ones, we're proud of you - Zagreb airport," read a huge banner attached to the airport building. The team are commonly known as the "fiery eleven."

The team, which arrived nearly an hour later than expected after flight delays, was greeted by government officials.

Crowds of people lined the 20 kilometre route from the airport into the city and cheered ecstatically as the team was driven by in a bus, led by cars bedecked with the chequered pattern and people waving flags out of sunroofs.

Some 30,000 people warmed up to local rock bands at the city centre party and the players arrived to a chaotic scene.

They pulled one youth after another onto the stage as they fainted in the crush and began to look nervous as it became crowded.

A placard behind the stage was decorated with a huge red and white football with the names of each player around it and "Ciro Majstore" (Ciro the master) in big black letters, after the nickname of 63-year-old coach Miroslav Blazevic.

He has become a national hero in the past month, however in 1996 there were calls for his dismissal after Croatia lost to Germany in the quarter-finals of the European Championship in England.

For the fans, Blazevic's prediction that the players "are so brilliant that they need only a little guidance to set them off on the road to glory" has come true.

Once the stage had been cleared striker Davor Suker and defender Igor Stimac sang along with a Croatian pop singer. They left after around half an hour to head for a meeting with President Franjo Tudjman at his presidential palace.

SEVEN'S $23 MILLION OFFER

By John Economos

The Channel 7 Network, despite denials to the contrary, (by almost everybody concerned and involved in the negotiations), plus evasive tactics by officials from Soccer Australia, will shortly be granted the television rights to broadcast Australia's National League as well as all its international matches.

The hierarchy at Seven very quickly were brought to attention by the massive public appeal that had rocked viewer ratings over the past 33 days right across Australia by the just completed World Cup finals played in France (screened exclusively by the Super Soccer Channel, SBS).

The sky-high quality presentation and production work done by SBS' Murray, Warren, Williams, Harper and Tyler, plus the back up from the Network's sports department that was flown over and based in Paris, galvanised the incredible commercial viability of televising Soccer, right home to Seven's executives in sport.

Seven Network's Programme Acquisitions Manager Alan Bateman was uncontactable, (on holidays), whilst the Network's General Manager Gary Rice was also unavailable to speak to ABSW yesterday.

Simon Francis, Seven's Director of Corporate Affairs would not deny or confirm his Network would be gaining the rights to Soccer.

SBS TV which has held almost the uninterrupted and exclusive TV rights for free-to-air broadcasting of Australian Soccer (both domestic League as well as all internationals) since 1981, very sadly has now ended.

SBS had paid over the past three years some $1.4 million for such exclusive rights to Soccer, plus in 1988 had very swiftly acted to secure from Asian dealers the exclusive TV rights for the last three World Cup finals starting with Italia '90 through to France '98.

And what a magnificent, very high quality and certainly world class job SBS has done throughout this period for the Australian Soccer fan.

Now it's being rumoured that the Seven Network is willing to outlay somewhere in the region of a massive $23 million to nail down the exclusive rights to all Australian Soccer over the next 10 years.

Soccer Australia's chief David Hill has been negotiating hard for the past year or so to wrench Soccer from the grips of SBS to get it on a commercial network.

Seven has gained a stranglehold on telecasting rights for many sports over the past couple of weeks, and is now poised to add Australian Soccer to its massive stable of sporting products.

With the recent collapse of programme supplier Sports Vision which provided the Soccer product screened on Optus, has been now placed into liquidation.

The Seven Network sprang into immediate action.

Having secured the telecasting rights to AFL, National Rugby League, Tennis, Union and now also some cricket, plus of course the last (Atlanta)) and Sydney 2000 Olympic Games, Seven has steamed ahead to finally nail down Soccer.

It's expected that the Seven Network will gain the rights to the National Soccer League and sell off some matches to be shown on Pay TV, whilst the best match will be retained for free-to-air transmission by Seven itself.

Winners for this week's competitions:

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Australian Features

TRAGEDY AND TRIUMPH

THE STANTHORPE HIGH STORY

The emotion of the World Cup is legendary. Yet Soccer is such a game that it can inspire emotions at all levels. Here is a story from Australia, a tale of hope and ultimate joy from something we all can relate to ...

When Stanthorpe State High took to the field in the Bill Turner Cup competition three years ago, no-one could have imagined the passions that would be aroused between St Joseph's and ourselves. Nor is it surprising because for three consecutive years, this local derby has result in the elimination of one of the two teams from the Darling Downs Area of the competition.

The passion was first felt in 1996, when both Stanthorpe High and St Joseph's reached the Area Final. The game, played at C.F. White Oval, Stanthorpe had all the atmosphere of a cup fina for players and supporters alike. With St. Joseph's equalising in the dying minutes of injury time, the match went into extra time, with the score at one-all.

Following a quick review of the rules from the handbook, by both coaches and officials, the game resolved to end up with the removal of players until only seven were left on the field for each team.

With the light growing dimmer by the minute, both teams prepared for a nail-biting penalty shoot-out.

My heart sank when the St Joey's keeper saved the crucial penalty. Shattered, we graciously accepted the result to leave St Joseph's to their noisy celebrations.

1997 was to be a repeat of the previous year, this time Stanthorpe High was eliminated in the first round match to the surprise of St Joseph's themselves.

With a team that was largely the same as that had made the finals the previous year, Stanthorpe High were hot favourites to progress to the second round, unfortunately, complacency and over-confidence were to take their toll when, after dominating all facets of the game for 55 minutes, Stanthorpe High could not get back a goal conceded in a rare attack by St Josephs.

Try as we might, Stanthorpe High was unable to penetrate what had become a 10-man defence. With several shots hitting the cross-bar and uprights, everyone's heart was collectively in their mouth.

When the final whistle blew, a number of Stanthorpe players wept openly. Again, we had lost to St Joseph's!

Without all of the players who had played in the two previous years now gone, prospects for the Bill Turner Cup competition in 1998 looked grim indeed.

When players' nominations for the team had been finalised, it seemed that the squad would be made up of, six year eights, six year nines and four year tens — at first sight not a team that was going to be competitive.

At a closer look however, Liam Riedy (Year 8) had played for Queensland U/12 and Mark Andreatta had also represented Queensland at U/14 level.

With Simon McWaters, who was also in the SWQ U/15 squad and Bradley Slater and Tim Featherstone both ex-SQW U/13 members, and Brendon Harvey also a current SWQ U/13 player, there were obviously enough boys on which to begin to build a team.

'The final whistle brought the roller-coaster of emotions to an end for everyone. We had finally done it!'

Mark Matthews-Frederick too was a competent basketball player with good hands and a willingness to learn the art of goalkeeping whilst Dean Beer is raw but is quick over five metres and has a great shot.

Sure they were mostly small in stature, but perhaps things were better than they first appeared!

Without sufficient time to organise a training session we were soon faced with a first round match against Pittsworth SHS.

The Pittsworth players were on average physically stronger and bigger but it soon became apparent they had little soccer playing experience.

In a disappointing match which we dominated from start to finish, we were able to win four goals to nil.

With one hastily organised training session under our belts we were now drawn to play Centenery Heights SHS (Toowoomba). C.F. White Oval provided us with a home advantage and soon, much to my surprise, we again began to get on top of our opponents.

Playing almost a two/three touch possession game so as not to be bustled off the ball by players who were bigger and physically stronger than us, we soon found ourselves one goal up. This is how the game ended.

We now began to believe in ourselves. Later that afternoon we were informed that our next round opponents would be either St Josephs or Warwick.

St Josephs' demolition of Warwick, 16-0, as reported in the local paper, gave the impression of an unstoppable team. In reality Warwick had a number of very young and inexperienced players as well as four young girls who, though they accredited themselves well under the circumstances, were no match for the speed and aggression of the St Joeys' forwards.

Having watched the match, it was clear that it would be no easy task containing them. The aim of the next training session was to not repeat the tactically naivity that Warwick had shown.

The key again would be to keep the ball moving quickly to feet and to mark tightly and to pressurise St Joey's sweeper, whenever possible.

The day of reckoning came on Wednesday 17 June. The venue was C.F. White Oval — the scene of our last two defeats. When the players met in the middle to be addressed by the referee, my heart sank when I saw the difference again in size between the two team — a sense of déjá vu came over the spectators and myself.

It was almost comical in retrospect to see Liam Riedy, who stands at 130cms come up against the 182cms defender, almost three times his weight, who was to mark him throughout the match.

But comedy can be both amusing and tragic as St. Joeys was about to find out.

Like everyone else, I was surprised to see that Stanthorpe SHS dominated from the kick-off. For the first 20 minutes we were camped in the St Joseph's half, unable to penetrate, with pint-sized Riedy terrorising his bigger opponent with some sparkling dribbling in the attacking third of the field, well supported by Mark Andreatta and Darrell Mitchell in midfield and Bradley Brendon in defence.

With constant urging from their coach, St Joseph's was able to turn the tide in the last few minutes to put us under pressure of the first time in the match.

No surprisingly in the second half, St Joseph's came out strongly taking up where they had left off. It is a credit to the Stanthorpe boys that they did not buckle under the pressure and were able on a number of occasion to turn defence quickly into attack through the work of the sweeper, McWaters, who was given a role of coming forward when possible.

On one of these forays into the St Joseph's half, some quick interpassing put Mark Andreatta into a good position on the edge of the box. Well balanced and with excellent accuracy, he fired and exquisite shot into the top left hand corner of the St Joey's goal, leaving Nicholas Sheahan (who is the current Australian Futsal U/14 keeper) flailing the air with his hand in a desperate dive.

Stunned and with 10 minutes to go, St Joseph's soon threw their own sweeper into attack. Many of the shots that St. Joseph's took were unable to hit the target.

The couple of long range shots that were on target were blocked by some desperate defending. The question 'Can we hold on?' was on all our lips as the seconds ticked by or was history to repeat itself?

The final whistle brought the roller-coaster of emotions to an end for everyone. The disappointment of the two previous years was washed away. We had finally done it! Stanthorpe State High the underdogs, had beaten St Joseph's.

Finally, let's not forget that is our duty, as stated in the Bill Turner Cup handbook, 'to encourage a positive attitude to participating in sporting events, in a spirit of friendliness' and to encourage good sportsmanship at all times.

I begin to wonder now that 1999 will bring. Will it be triumph or tragedy?

By Franco Arcidacono

Coach Stanthorpe High School

PORTER'S CASE FOR NSL INCLUSION

By Aidan Ormond

Dave Mitchell, Joe Mullen, Nathan Day, Aurelio Vidmar. Quality local strikers. The name may not be a familiar one on the national scene, but Joel Porter has been attracting the sort of reviews indicate that this teenager may join the long line of South Australian-raised strikers on the national, and international, stage.

The striker, 19, has played all his club football with Croydon Kings, the newly promoted side in the South Australian Premier League. In fact, the Kings are sitting in the top three in their first year in the league, after spending some time on top of the pack.

According to Rob Michelon from Radio 5RTI (the station that covers South Australian premier league), Porter is one of the main reasons why the new boys on the block have really shaken things up.

However the jump from state to premier league has been something that the young striker, a former state junior rep, found time to adjust to.

"There is a big difference between premier and state. The players are of a higher quality In the state league it was much more physical. In this league you can move the ball around and play good soccer."

As for his heroes, Porter likes to model himself on Eric Cantona, "because I really liked the way he played and his type of position, striker or attacking midfielder, is also my favourite."

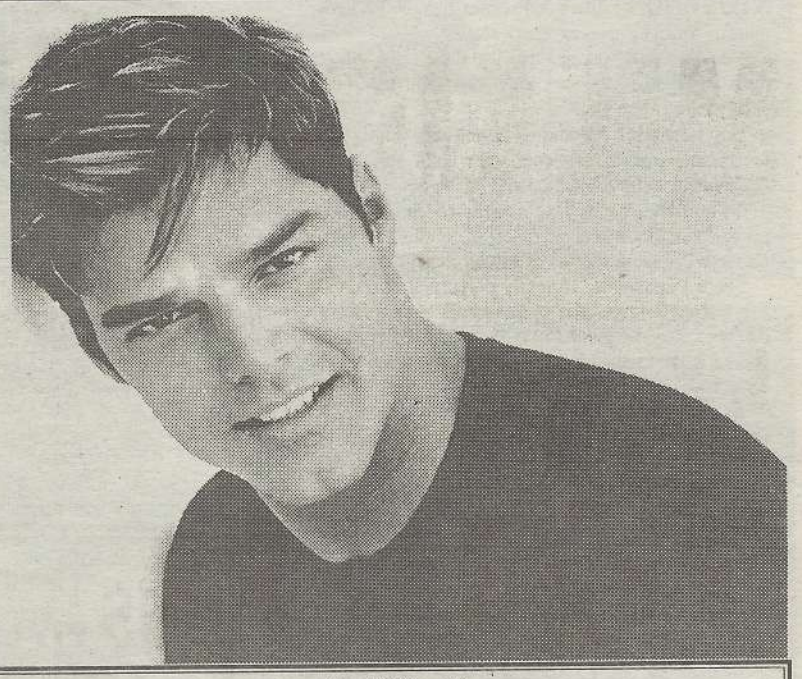
Playing in the NSL is his short-term aim with Adelaide being the obvious choice.

"I guess Adelaide Sharks would be my preferred way if I played NSL in South Australia because Nathan Day looks like he may be moving and Adelaide City already have Mori, who of course is one of the best, but really, if a club interstate made an offer I would seriously be thinking about it."

Porter works for Adelaide prosecutions. No doubt he will be hoping to provide an Ericsson Cup club with evidence that he is ready to make the jump to the big-time.

Although Europe is his long-term goal, his first hurdle — state to premier league — has been prosecuted with great style.

Legal metaphors aside, just like Queensland's Glen Kolpak, there are young state-based strikers itching to step up to the NSL. Remember you heard about Joel Porter first in ABSW.



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Australian News

BRONDOLINO: FANS THE PRIORITY

By Dwyght Tuffnell

This year's Victorian Premier League finals series will be played at Ericsson Cup grounds in Melbourne. Knights Stadium will hold the first three weeks of the series with the Grand Final being played at Lakeside Stadium.

In the past, teams who finished in the top five hosted finals games but, becuase of incidents last season, the Victorian Soccer Federation has scrapped the idea.

Kingston Heath Soccer Complex hosted the first week of last year's finals, a day which turned to farce.

The ground has very little cover and when it started to pour rain many of the 2000 spectators simply left.

"That won't happen again," according to dynamic VSF chairman Joe Brondolino.

"The spectators have to be a top priority," said Brondolino, "it's better for them to sitting in comfort than standing out in the pouring rain.

"It doesn't really worry me that clubs lose a couple of thousand dollars in canteen money they got in the past when hosting the finals."

The Premier League finals are always well supported, but some fans have been dissuaded for not attending because of the facilities at Premier League grounds, most of which have no cover nor seating.

"Maybe it will work in a way that these clubs will get their act together and start improving their facilities," added Brondolino.

Grounds in the Premier League are generally of a pretty poor standard however some clubs are already beginning some much needed ground improvements.

Bulleen Inter Kings have recently added a roof to a grandstand which seats about 800. Bentleigh Greens also have big plans for their Kingston Heath ground.

South Dandenong, currently playing at Springvale City's Ross Reserve, plan to move back to their George Andrews Reserve ground next season. Whether they'll still be in the Premier League to showcase it remains to be seen.

As well as the supporters, this move by the VSF to Ericsson Cup grounds is a popular decision with the coaches, who feel that playing on better grounds will produce the best soccer.

Meanwhile, relegation battlers in the Victorian Premier Leaugue, Moorabbin City, are facing an even tougher fight off the pitch. City currently share the Kingston Heath Soccer Complex with fellow Premier League club Bentleigh Greens.

But plans to upgrade the grounds rather spartan facilities have left Moorabbin with no other option than to leave the ground.

According to club president, Sam Laverty, Moorabbin are re-assessing their options, but will definitely not be playing at Kingston Heath next season.

"We deliberated long and hard about it but we find it hard to see a future at Kingston Heath.

"It's difficult for us to commit money to facilities we would only be able to use two nights a week."

Laverty said that the two clubs got on well but that a club like Moorabbin needs to be generating money twelve months a year, not losing it like they are by playing at Kingston Heath.

Moorabbin have explored the opportunity of finding another ground within their area to play at, but none are currently available.

"We've been talking to other clubs about the possibility of amalgamation," said Laverty.

Rumours going around already have the club joined with State League Division Two outfits Old Scotch Waverley and Frankston Strikers.

Should the club amalgamate, they would retain their spot in the Premier League (providing they stay up that is).

"It's no secret that Moorabbin City have struggled financially this season," Laverty says alluding to the fact that the Premier League is not the goldmine some lower division teams perceive it to be.

"I have been very disappointed with the crowds in the Premier League.

"When you come up like we did you expect to make a bit more money, but the crowds that some teams have brought have been very small.

"Should we go down, the next time we come up, we'll be approaching things very differently," ended Laverty.

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WORLD CUP IN AUSTRALIA?

By Aidan Ormond

Well, if you can't qualify then host the damn thing! Soccer Australia have officially made a play to host the World Cup in 2006 or 2010. FIFA received the official application last week in Paris. Others to put a bid in were England, Germany and South Africa.

We have has also put in a bid for the 2001 Confederations Cup.

What Australia has going for its World Cup hosting are three things. Firstly, given the distance factor, hooligans are much less likely to arrive in Australia, and even if they did, known troublemakers can easily be weeded out at entry points. In this case being an island far away from Europe is an advantage (USA 94 is a good example).

Second, the ticketing debacle. With a smaller population, there should be enough tickets for anyone who wants to make the journey here, and, the local fans.

Third, our multicultural population ensures that we have existing support for just about every country likely to play in a World Cup.

And finally, FIFA boss Sepp Blatter is a self-confessed Australian fan, which is good, but don't hold your breath. Politics always plays a role in such things.

ALLSOPP SIGNS FOR MAN CITY?

By Dwyght Tuffnell

After losing Andy Vargas to the Olyroo squad, Port Melbourne Sharks now have to do without Daniel Allsopp for the rest of the season. Allsopp, who signed with the Sharks after a disappointing stint with Carlton, is in England trialling with Manchester City.

The trial will continue until early August but Sharks president Phil Diamataris said that it was going well and it looks as though that Allsopp may be signed by City, thereby ensuring a big pay-day for Port Melbourne, although a percentage would go to Carlton.

Meanwhile, with 18 goals to his name, Sunshine Georgies teenager Anthony Magnacca has become the hottest property in the Premier League.

Carlton's interest in him is well-known (he and fellow Georgies player Brandon Vassallo have been invited to train with the Blues), but he is also catching the attention clubs outside Victoria.

Marconi are believed to be another club seeking Magnacca's services.

And yet another Aussie keeper is overseas. Victorian Damian Beattie is the latest goalkeeper to be signed up by an English club.

Beattie, 19, has signed for Notts County who have just been promoted to Division Two after taking out the Division Three championship.

He was offered a contract by manager Sam Allardyce after impressing during a two month trial in which he played a number of reserve team matches.

Aussie keepers are all the rage in England at the moment with four (Bosnich, Filan, Ilic and Schwarzer) playing in the Premier League next season, which as we all know is now one of the best in the world.

Beattie has represented Victoria at every junior level as well as the Australian Schoolboys team, plus he attended the VIS for two and a half years. He also played in the Premier League for Bulleen and Fawkner.

ABSW wishes all our players overseas the best of luck for the coming European season.

Man City bound? Ex-Young Socceroo striker Daniel Allsopp.

Australian News

BREAKERS ANNOUNCE NEW TEAM

By John Economos

Lee Sterrey, Newcastle Breakers' newly appointed coach, has just announced his new coaching staff for the coming season.

The industrious Sterrey who has already shifted his digs from Sydney up to Newcastle said: "David Lowe will be our Youth team coach with Bobby Naumov as David's assistant.

"We have installed Steve Doorman as the Breakers' goalkeeping coach and have retained the excellent Ms Regina Larard as the club's physiotherapist."

Sterrey was especially happy with Shane Johnson, the club's media liason officer.

The Breakers staged Soccer clinics during the school holidays which proved a great success.

Sterrey added: "Shane Johnson did a wonderful job setting it all up as we ended up with almost 400 kids that enrolled at our clinics.

"It was all because of the great input by Shane Johnson who did the lot by himself."

In his hunt to build a new squad at Newcastle Sterrey is believed to be chasing Sutherland's promising young goalkeeper Paul Henderson, in whom the Nothern Spirit has also shown keen interest.

And down in the harbour city, Sydney Olympic, at a Media Conference staged yesterday (Monday), launched its new emblem that replaces it traditional 'five ring' logo.

The new logo features traditional Sydney icons, such as the Opera house and the Harbour bridge.

The cash rich club also announced plans for a Youth Soccer Academy.

Lee Sterrey

David Lowe

SCOTTY RARING TO GO

By John Economos

Scott Ollerenshaw, who has already signed with the League's fledgling club Northern Spirit is expected back in Sydney from Malaysia within five weeks.

The former St George international flier will undergo an operation to scrape some bone fragments from his injured ankle before pre-season training with Spirit.

Currently playing in the Malaysian National League for club side Negri Sembilan, Scotty stated last night from Malaysia : "It's nothing serious at all but I want it done as soon as possible to avoid any breakdowns during the new season."

And in other Northern Spirit news, last Sunday the fledgling club staged a 'World Cup Family fun Day' at its home ground North Sydney Oval.

Head coach Graham Arnold, striker Clayton Zane and a host of former Australian internationals plus the entire Northern Spirit squad were on hand to conduct clinics and sign autographs.

Activities kicked off at 11am with bands, food and other entertainment provided and continued through until the end of a celebrity match which was also played.

This celebrity match included sporting personalities such as Olympic swimmer Chris Fydler, Australian cricketer Gavin Roberts, ironman Craig Riddington and former Manly Rugby League star Des Hasler as well as media personnel from Channel 10 and Radio 2GB.

Newly appointed Media Director for Spirit David Mason said: "The French Deputy Consul General, Mr Dominic Lopez was our special guest as his country was hosting the World Cup."

The 'World Cup Family Fun Day' was organised as part of the Northern Spirit's endeavour to make the Northern Sydney sports fan feel most welcome and be a part of the Spirit for the coming season. A great day was had by all concerned.

ZELIC BACK FOR OLYROOS

By Aidan Ormond

Good news for Australia. Ivan Zelic and Kasey Wehrman, two of our most skilful young stars missing for too long with injuries, are back in national shirts with the Olyroos.

Sadly the U/23s lost their first match in 1998 when they were beaten by Argentine outfit San Lorenzo in the first game of Australia's South American tour played last Saturday.

The Olyroos depart for Chile today (Tuesday July 14) for three matches against Universidad Catolica (15.7.98), Union Espanola (18.7.98) and the Chile U/23 team (21.7.98).

Australian coach Raul Blanco also confirmed that the Olyroos will play the Argentine U/23 side on Wednesday, July 29.

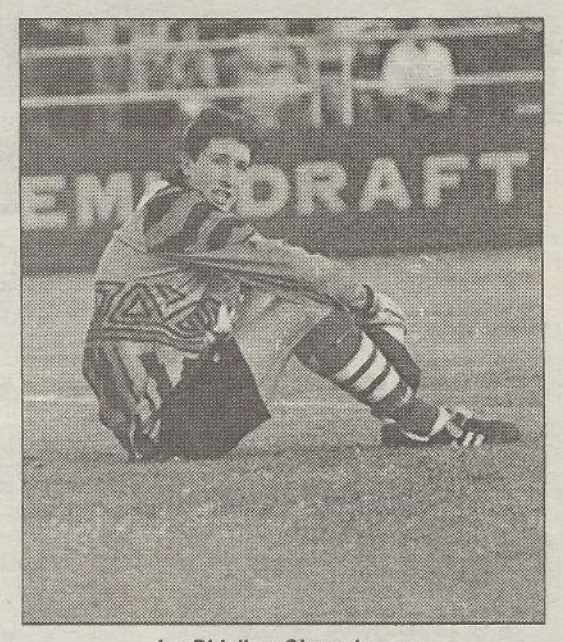
Match 1: San Lorenzo 1 Olyroos 0

Australian team line-up: Joe Didulica, Jacob Burns, Tansel Baser, Dragi Nastevski, Sebastian Sinozic, Ivan Zelic, Marco Bresciano, Kasey Wehrman, Michael Curcija, Zeljko Susa, Brett Emerton.

Substitutes: Nick Carle, Christian Care, Andy Vargas.

Yellow Cards: Wehrman, Sinozic

Venue: The San Lorenzo Stadium



Joe Didulica: Olyroo keeper.

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Australian News

DUMPED CATLIN WINS AWARD

By John Economos

Bob Catlin, the gentle giant goalkeeper who was some weeks back told by Sydney Olympic's new coaching management his services were no longer required despite still having a one year term of his contract left, received an ironic, but deserving surprise recently.

At Olympic's awards night, Catlin, 33, easily won the club's 'Best and Fairest' trophy, much to the embarrassment of the new coaching staff that some weeks before had discarded him.

The terminated Olympic custodian told me: "It's a bit hard to understand it all really."

And in other news, Ericsson, the major sponsor of the National League, recently issued notice to the financial world that it is strongly considering closing down its manufacturing operations at Broadmeadows in Victoria. This is part of its global rationalisation of manufacturing sites.

However, it is believed that Ericsson's major sponsorship involvement with our National Soccer League will not be affected or placed in any form of jeopardy whatsoever.

An official from Soccer Australia was confident of this, also saying that: "Besides, we still have Ericsson for another year under contract with an option to continue."

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SYDNEY WEST NSW CHAMPIONS

By ABSW

After three days of intense football, with drama and skill at a very high level, Sydney West and Sydney North met as worthy finalists in the 1998 NSW Combined High Schools Open Girls Regional final. This classic was played at Warners Bay Soccer Club situated on the northern tip of beautiful Lake Macquarie.

It was a dour but absorbing struggle between two sides that simply would not give anything away and was dominated by strong midfield play. This was clearly evident by the fact that both goalkeepers had very little to do.

The three days played among the ten very strong regional sides was taking its toll. Even Amanda Poulton, the player selected as 'Player of the Tournament' found the going tough. However, Poulton and Justine McLaughlin did produce some excellent play in the final, underlying their undoubted quality.

For Sydney North, Danielle Clarke, Lisa Collins and Fiona young caught the eye with some terrific play.

With a no goal scoreline, referee Brad Carlin called the teams into the dreaded penalty-kick decider. It doesn't matter if it's the World Cup or the Bill Turner Cup, these scenarios are as exciting as they are nerve-wracking for both fans and players alike.

The tension ran high as both sides kept the scores level until Leah Camm went the right way to block the penalty and give Sydney West the title. Now

Beaten semi-finalists South Coast and Hunter finished in that order, followed by Sydney South West, Sydney East, North Coast, Riverina, North West and Western.

The tournament was a credit to the CHS and the Hunter Organising Committee.

Champions! Sydney West.

VEART RETURNS DAY BREAKS?

By Rob & Frank from Radio SRTI

Reports of former Adelaide City and Socceroo striker Carl Veart, currently with English club Millwall, returning to South Australia continue.

It is believed that the player is building a home in Adelaide and is considering a return. Adelaide City would seem to be the obvious choice for the striker with a great record of scoring in the Ericsson Cup.

Another player who could be wearing a black and white shirt this coming season is skilful Shark Corey Artone.

And the Shark known as 'Velcro' (for his long mutton chops sideburns) should be appearing for Sydney United next year. This would be a great loss for South Australian Soccer.

In fact, Pumas head coach, the former Adelaide-based striker Davey Mitchell has been seen in Adelaide watching Premier League games with a view to picking up a quality player or two.

Check out the interview on page five with another up-and-coming SA striker, Croydon Kings striker Joel Porter. He is a young player destined for the Ericsson Cup sooner rather than later. Despite playing for a newly-promoted side, Porter, 19, has had no problem finding the net and has impressed many with his attitude and nose for goal.

Carl Veart ... one of a long line of top strikers to be produced by South Australia.

Australia Wide

Soccer Queensland

By Glenn Davis

A makeshift Taringa Rovers brought Ipswich Knights' dream XXXX league run to an end and surged back into semi-final contention with a decisive 1-0 win at Eric Evans Reserve on Sunday.

Taringa midfielder Des Hughes combined with former Ipswich player Richard Hilli on the edge of the box to drive home the match winner with 15 minutes left.

Ipswich, who were at full strength following the return of several keys players including Nick Sealy, missed sharing the points with striker Peter Vogler snapped a close range shot onto the crossbar two minutes from time.

The result was a tribute to coach John Ogden who was again forced to make several important changes with four key players missing from last week's side which held league leaders Brisbane City to a 2-2 draw.

"On the balance of play I though we deserved to win," Ogden said.

"It was a very exciting game and real end to end stuff but I was more than happy considering we had four players out."

Missing from the Taringa line-up was defender Joe Hale, sweeper Dmitri Theochari and midfielders Clint McDermott and Danny Brittain.

"We had a makeshift defence today and our oldest players was Richard Hilli who's only 22," Ogden said.

Taringa's victory ended a mini-slump which saw them slide from second to fifth in the space of only a few weeks.

Taringa are now back in fourth place on the league table which again has taken on another reshuffle of the pack.

Brisbane City confirmed their favouritism tag for premiership honours which a 3-0 thrashing over Rochedale Rovers at Spencer Park.

Rochedale started the game in third place with 34 points but so close is the battle for semi-final positions that the glamour side has slid to fifth place, one point outside the top four battle.

Only three points separates second placed Ipswich (37 points) and Rochedale who were leap frogged by Taringa and Brisbane Lions who scored an emphatic 4-nil win over wooden-spooners Beenleigh.

Beenleigh were no match for Brisbane Lions who raced to a 4-0 lead a half time, although they shared the second half spoils.

Lions' took only three minutes to open the scoring when midfielder Darren Hillier capitalised on a Beenleigh defence error tucking the ball past keeper Chris Roche, who was playing his last game for the club before moving to Melbourne on work commitments.

Lions' second goal came from a perfectly struck left foot volley from defender David Lonsdale 25 metres out which appeared to catch Roche by surprise as if he was unsighted.

Veteran Frank Mengotti finished off a neat switch of play from youngster Brett McPaul ten minutes from the break with a powerful strike from just inside the box for the visitors third.

If Beenleigh's heart had not already been broken, then it was when Mengotti picked up his double two minutes from the interval when he tapped in from close range after Roche partly blocked a Warren Allen thunderbolt.

Lions' coach Miron Bleiberg would have been delighted with the result which improved their goal differences although his well-drilled charges were held scoreless in the second half.

In other results, Mt Gravatt ended Wynnum's recent run of good fortune with a 2-1 home win at Dittmer Park while Bundaberg got back into a winning mood with a decisive 3-1 win over Gold Coast.

Queensland XXXX League

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Brisbane City	20	14	5	1	50	15	47
IPSW Knights	20	12	1	7	32	29	37
Brisbane Lions	20	11	3	6	38	28	36
Taringa Rovers	20	10	5	5	29	20	35
Rochedale Rov	20	11	1	8	33	25	34
Mt Gravatt	20	6	6	8	34	33	24
Gold Coast	20	5	6	9	25	30	21
Wynnum	19	5	4	10	24	32	19
B'Berg Waves	19	6	1	12	25	40	19
Beenleigh	20	3	0	17	21	59	9

ROUND 20

Brisbane City	3	Rochedale Rov	0
IPSW Knights	0	Taringa Rovers	1
Mt Gravatt	2	Wynnum	1
Beenleigh	0	Brisbane Lions	4
B'Berg Waves	3	Gold Coast	1

Soccer West Coast

FIRST DIVISION ROUND 15

Armadale Park	1	Bassendean Caledonians	2
Queens Park	3	Stirling Suns	6
Ashfield-Bunbury	5	Perth City/Leeming Strikers	3
Waneroo	1	Rockingham City	0
Balcatta	1	Southside United	0
North Lake Espanol	1	Swan IC	5

PREMIER LEAGUE ROUND 15

Bayswater City Panthers	2	Inglewood Falcons	2
Stirling Macedonia	1	Sorrento	1
Dianella White Eagles	5	Kingsway Olympic	3
Floreat Athena	0	Fremantle City	4

NBN League

On Saturday in the NBN match of the day Wallsend Red Devils snatched a two all draw in the last minutes of the match over East Maitland at Cooks Square Park to hold third spot on the ladder.

Cameron Hudson's half-volley beat Wallsend 'keeper Jason Kos in the 28th minute. Scott McGuire scoring the equaliser for Wallsend right on half-time.

Maitland was back in the lead in the 68th minute off an Alan Gilday header. Scott McGuire scoring again to share the points with the match in extra time.

On Sunday competition leaders, Edgeworth Eagles, were upset 3-2 by the fast improving Adamstown Rosebuds and with Hamilton accounting for Highfields 3-2 have taken the competition lead.

In the NBN match of the day on Sunday, Cessnock Hornets defeated Weston Workers Bears 4-2 in the coalfields derby.

2HD League

Mayfield and Thornton Park clashed at Mayfield Park on Saturday in the 2HD match of the day, with Mayfield scoring a 3-1 win. Thornton shot to the lead early in the match only for the Mayfield to equalise when Brian Simpson scored and then Danny Miles sent the home side to the break ahead 2-1. Phil Koina sealed the match for Mayfield in the second half.

Meanwhile Budgewoi Budgies grabbed a three way split of the competition lead with a hard fought 3-2 win over Beresfield at Budgewoi Oval.

Beresfield, West Wallsend and Budgewoi all share the lead in the 2HD League.

Steve Powis and Mick Harris scoring for Budgewoi and Scott Wadwell and David Gabriel for Beresfield tying up the score line 2 all by half-time.

Lucca Salvador sealed the match and a share of the points table lead for the Budgies in the dying minutes of the match.

Victorian Churches Association

ROUND 10

Berwick Blues	0	Lilydale First	3
Morrison	1	Eastern UTD First	3
Nth Blackburn First	0	Box Hill	1

Ladder	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Eastern Utd First	10	9	1	0	26	7	28
Lilydale First	10	5	2	3	26	16	17
Morrison	10	4	3	3	20	20	15
Box Hill	10	3	1	6	11	20	10
Nth Blackburn First	10	2	2	6	15	21	8
Berwick Blue	10	2	1	7	12	26	7

Illawarra Soccer

PREMIER LEAGUE

Dapto	0	Bulli	0
Cringila Lions	3	Coniston Lions	1
Northern Utd	2	Fernhill	1
Lysaghts	1	Helensburgh	0
Kemblawarra	3	White Eagles	3

Sunday Match of the Day

Port Kembla	3	W'gong Olympic	2

South Australia

PREMIER LEAGUE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
West Torrens Birkalla	13	10	1	2	30	19	31
Campbelltown City	13	9	1	3	28	13	28
Croydon	13	7	2	4	27	21	23
Cumberland United	13	6	2	5	18	22	20
Adelaide Blue Eagles	13	6	1	6	18	20	19
Elizabeth City	13	4	4	5	19	17	16
White City Warriors	13	4	4	5	18	17	16
Olympians	13	4	0	9	12	27	12
Port Adelaide Lion	12	2	3	7	13	21	9
Raiders	12	2	2	8	14	20	8

ROUND 13 SCORES

Raiders	0	Port Adelaide Lion	0
West Torrens Birkalla	1	Olympians	0
Adelaide Blue Eagles	1	Campbelltown City	5
Elizabeth City	4	Cumberland United	2
White City Warriors	3	Croydon	2

STATE LEAGUE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Modbury	17	11	4	2	41	20	37
Enfield City	17	10	3	4	29	29	33
West Adelaide	16	10	2	4	43	27	32
Adelaide City	16	9	3	4	36	18	30
Adelaide Cobras	17	9	3	5	35	27	30
Para Hills Knights	17	9	1	7	34	30	28
Noarlunga United	17	6	3	8	27	32	21
Salisbury United	17	6	3	8	27	32	21
Adelaide Hills	17	5	3	9	30	41	18
Wester Strikers	17	3	4	10	21	33	13
Port Pirie City	17	3	4	10	31	50	13
Seaford	17	4	1	12	24	43	13

ROUND 17 SCORES

Noarlunga United	3	Seaford	1
Western Strikers	1	Salisbury United	3
Port Pirie City	0	Adelaide City	2
Enfield City	1	Adelaide Cobras	0
Modbury	2	Para Hills Knights	1
Adelaide Hills	2	West Adelaide	1

BILL TURNER CUP

ROUND 2

Mareeba 8 Smithfield,0, St Augustines Cairns 1 Tully 0, Burdekin 3 William Ross 0, Yeppoon 3 St Brendans Rockhampton 0, Chanel 3 Tooloola 0, Gympie 1 St Patricks Gympie 0, Coolum 4 Noosa 0, Burnside 3 St Johns Nambour 0, Maroochydore 4 Christian Outreach 2, Pine Rivers 6 Grace Lutheran 1, Nudgee College 7 Albany Creek 0, Brisbane Grammar 8 St James Spring Hill 0, Roma 8 Charleville 0, Brisbane State 1 MacGregor 0, Marsden 4 Chisholm 2, Browns Plain 4 St Francis Marsden 2, Redeemer 3 Christian Outreach Mansfield 0, Holland Park 3 Redlands 0, Cavendish Road 5 Anglican Grammar 0, Alexandra Hills 3 Capalaba 0, Beaudesert 7 South Queensland 1, Trinity Catholic 9 Beenleigh 0, All Saints 3 Robina 1.

ROUND 3

Mareeba 3 Cairns 2, St Augustines 4 St Marys Cairns 0, Ignatius Park 1 Gilroy College 0, Kirwan 3 Burdekin 0, Blackwater 3 Dysart 0, Yeppoon 3 Glenmore 0, Bundaberg 2 Shalon 1, Maroochydore 2 Maleny 1, Pine Rivers 3 Caboolture 2, Concordia 2 St Marys Toowoomba, 1 Stanthorpe 1 St Josephs Stanthorpe 0, Bremer 3 Rosewood 1, Marist Ashgrove 2 brisbane State 0, Ferny Grove 9 Mt Maria 0, Villanova 4 Holland Park 1, Cavendish Road 3 Alexandra Hills 0.

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NSW STATE LEAGUES

NSW SOCCER FEDERATION: SUPER LEAGUE

	1ST	U/21	U/18
Blacktown City v Central Coast	2-0	6-1	3-1
Parramatta Eagles v Sutherland Sharks	1-2	3-0	4-0
St George v Canterbury Berries	0-1	1-0	3-1
Leichhardt Tigers v Bankstown City Lions	1-3	3-4	0-2
Eastern Suburbs v Macarthur Rams	3-0	1-3	2-2
Bonnyrigg WE v Ryde City Gunners	3-0	2-0	0-2
*Parramatta Eagles v Ryde City	3-0	2-0	0-2
*Macarthur Rams v Sutherland Sharks		6-0	2-0

First Grade: Parramatta 2 (R Younis 36m, S Petrovski 52m) drew Ryde City 2 (A Centinay 47m, J Kelly 69m), Blacktown City 2 (J. Angelucci 47m, D. Smith 60m) bt Central Coast 0, Sutherland Sharks 2 (C. Hobbs 55m, C. Harrod 89m) bt Parramatta Eagles 1 (R. Younis 76m), Canterbury Berries 1 (J. Nikas 24m) bt St George 0, Bankstown City Lions 3 (S. Eagleton 28m, T. Veleski 44m, J. Josevski 91m) bt Leichhardt Tigers 1 (J. Anderson 8m), Eastern Suburbs 3 (N. Daniels 19m Pen, 90m, J. Bennett 85m) bt Macarthur Rams 0, Bonnyrigg White Eagles 3 (R. Gomez 36m, C. Luff 38m/43m) bt Ryde City Gunners 0.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	DIF	PTS
Blacktown City	19	12	3	4	37	20	17	39
Bonnyrigg We	19	11	4	4	39	21	18	37
Macarthur Rams	19	11	3	5	33	27	6	36
Parramatta Eagles	19	10	4	5	43	26	17	34
Eastern Suburbs	19	10	3	6	43	25	18	33
Canterbury Berries	19	10	3	6	31	29	2	33
Leichhardt Tigers	19	8	5	6	30	27	3	29
Bankstown City	19	7	5	7	29	28	1	26
Sutherland Shire	19	4	5	10	15	31	-16	17
Central Coast	19	4	3	12	23	36	-13	15
Ryde City Gunners	19	3	5	11	18	36	-18	14
St George Saints	19	1	3	15	16	51	-35	6

U/21: Parramatta Eagles 4 bt Ryde City 3, Macarthur Rams 6 bt Sutherland Sharks 0, Blacktown City 6 bt Central Coast 1, Parramatta Eagles 3 bt Sutherland Sharks 0, St George 1 bt Canterbury Berries 0, Bankstown City Lions 4 bt Leichhardt Tigers 3, Macarthur Rams 3 bt Eastern Suburbs 1, Bonnyrigg White Eagles 2 bt Ryde City Gunners 0.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	DIF	PTS
Parramatta Eagles	19	15	2	2	47	19	28	47
Bonnyrigg WE	19	14	2	3	64	20	44	44
Blacktown City	19	11	4	4	44	25	19	37
Macarthur Rams	19	11	2	6	44	24	20	35
Eastern Suburbs	19	10	4	5	42	26	16	34
St George Saints	19	8	2	9	30	26	-6	26
Leichhardt Tigers	19	7	4	8	35	37	-2	25
Canterbury Berries	19	7	2	10	31	34	-3	23
Bankstown City	19	6	2	11	29	38	-10	20
Sutherland Shire	19	42	13	20	53	-33	14	
Ryde City Gunners	19	3	3	13	20	49	-29	12
Central Coast	19	2	3	14	23	67	-44	9

U/18: Macarthur Rams 2 bt Sutherland Sharks 0, Blacktown City 3 bt Central Coast 1, Parramatta Eagles 4 bt Sutherland Sharks 0, St George 3 bt Canterbury Berries 1, Bankstown City Lions 2 bt Leichhardt Tigers 0, Eastern Suburbs 2 drew Macarthur Rams 2, Ryde City Gunners 2 bt Bonnyrigg White Eagles 0.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	DIF	PTS
Parramatta Eagles	19	14	4	1	50	10	40	46
Bankstown City	19	11	5	3	44	17	27	38
Blacktown City	19	11	4	4	33	19	14	37
Macarthur Rams	19	9	5	5	32	22	10	32
Ryde City Gunners	19	9	5	5	29	24	5	32
Eastern Suburbs	19	7	7	5	33	33	0	28
Leichhardt Tigers	19	7	6	6	32	31	1	27
Bonnyrigg WE	19	7	3	9	36	37	-1	24
St George Saints	19	5	5	9	33	34	-1	20
Central Coast	19	3	4	12	24	37	-13	13
Canterbury Berries	19	2	4	13	15	43	-28	10
Sutherland Shire	19	1	4	14	15	69	-54	7

DIVISION ONE

	1ST	U/21	U/18
Bathurst '75 v Mt Pritchard	1-0	3-0	2-0
Moorebank Sports v Illawarra Lions	1-1	5-2	1-3
Penrith Panthers v Manly Warringah	0-1	1-2	2-0
Belmore Hercules v Hurstville City	1-3	0-6	3-1
AC United v Hills United	4-3	0-0	1-1
Auburn United v Rockdale City Suns	0-1	2-5	0-3
Fairfield Bulls v Stanmore Hawks	2-1	0-1	3-2
**Moorebank Sports v Bathurst '75	2-0	2-0	3-1
*Mt Pritchard v Belmore Hercules	3-2	4-2	1-0
**Penrith Panthers v Illawarra Lions	1-1		
*Hurstvifle City v Manly Warringah	1-1	2-1	
*Rockdale City Suns v AC United			3-7

Bankstown City crush the Tigers

By John Economos

Bankstown City Lions with a well drilled and unified display of attacking Soccer easily disposed of the Leichhardt Tigers 1-3 last Sunday at Lambert Park, effectively killing off the Tigers' slight hopes of making the Top Five play offs.

Bankstown fully deserved their victory despite being handicapped through the sending off of their right defender Michael Hawrysiuk when he felled striker John Buonavoglia to earn a second yellow card 15 minutes from fulltime.

Hugely inspired by intelligent left midfielder Tony Veleski and industrious skipper and striker Milan Todorovski, Bankstown City for most of the match were rarely threatened.

Ironically though it was the Tigers that drew first blood as early as the seventh minute. Striker Leon Alexiou crossed from the right to find fellow striker Jay Anderson in the box who headed strongly into the target from close range.

But the Tigers failed to tighten their grip on their slender lead and on the half hour mark the Lions equalised through some fine work by attacking right midfielder Steve Eagleton. The mobile Eagleton hammered home a cross fired in from the left that gave giant goalkeeper Bobby Catlin no chance.

Seconds after this goal the Tigers lost young striker Anderson with a hamstring injury and was replaced by another youngster David Petrini.

Then the Lions roared to a 1-2 lead seconds before the break when Man Of The Match Tony Veleski cracked into the target a vicious left footed drive from just inside the box when the Tigers' defence inexplicably hesitated in shutting him down.

Bankstown City were denied yet another goal 20 minutes into the second half when striker Mendo Lozevski had his fine effort well saved by Catlin.

Bankstown's midfield quartet of Steve Eagleton, Alen Stavcic, Tony Josevski and Tony Veleski were always industrious and alert to outplay the Tigers in centre pitch.

Seven minutes from time Leichhardt's left back Steve Cklamovski came close to 'balancing the books' but his drive fired in from the left screwed just wide of the back post.

Just when everyone thought the scoring was all but done, seconds from time Bankstown hit their third and final goal from that fine midfielder Josevski.

Flying into the box from the right Josevski fired a rocketing lifting shot that flashed into the top left corner of the target to ultimately make it 1-3 to the Lions.

Top performers for Bankstown were Josevski, Todorovski and Eagleton whilst for Leichhardt their best were Alexiou and Buonavoglia.

A most satisfied Bankstown coach Blagoje Kuleski stated to ABSW after the match: "I was very pleased with all my team as it was a physical match with good Soccer played. The only regret is that had we played like today in all our previous matches, we would now be looking at a Top Five position.

"We played four draws and those eight points we lost in these games cost us dearly. We have a very young and inexperienced team for this competition."

Kuleski later resigned his position, stating club and personal reasons for his decision.

Meanwhile Leichhardt's disappointed coach Arno Bertogna reflected: "We looked very sluggish and were not competitive except for the first 15 minutes or so. When we lost our striker Jay (Anderson) we dropped off. We later had some opportunities but didn't take them and if you fail to score you can't win, can you?"

A most interested observer at the match casting an eye over both sets of players was none other than Marconi's newly appointed coach Frank Farina.

LEICHHARDT TIGERS: Catlin: Bazdaric (Lombardo 74th), Treharne (Lamacchia 67th), Pettenon, Tesoro: D. Totaro, Savoca, Cklamovski: Buonavoglia, Alexiou, Anderson (Petrini 30th).

BANKSTOWN CITY LIONS: Aceski: Hawrysiuk, Luksic, Badrov, Van Bentum: Eagleton, Stavcic, Josevski, Veleski: Todorovski, Lozevski (Bozinovski 90th).

SCORERS: Leichhardt-Anderson 7thm. Bankstown-Eagleton 30th, Veleski 44th and Josevski 90thm.

Red Card Bankstown-Hawrysiuk 75th.

Referee: J.Tippett.

First Grade: Mt Pritchard 3 (G Baldock 4m, V Tomisevic 9m, J Bruni 80m) bt Belmore Hercules 2 (J Pelekanos 55m, K Tsaousidis 90m), Penrith Panthers 1 (B Buckpitt 9m) drew Illawarra Lions 1 (D Counter 79m), Hurstville City 1 (T Pontidas 26m) drew Manly Warringah 1 (T Krslovic 60m), Bathurst '75 1 (M Rooke 67m) bt Mt Pritchard 1, Moorebank Sports 1 (A Verzi 89m) drew Illawarra Lions 1 (V Tasevski 2m), Manly Warringah 1 bt Penrith Panthers, Hurstville City 3 (T. Pontidas 36m, L. Dounis 60m, D. Fernandez 72m) bt Belmore Hercules 1 (S. Kladis 68m), AC United 4 (C. Gibson 4m, O. El Ali 55m, Z. Younan 75m, M. Vancuylenberg 78m) bt Hills United 3 (M. Heaton 37m, G. Dwyer 40m, A. Miller 57m), Rockdale City Suns 1 (N. Kojiouski 73m) bt Auburn United 0, Fairfield Bulls 2 (I. Stoddart 41/88m) bt Stanmore Hawks 1 (C. Briscoe 57m), Moorebank Sports 2 (M. Necevski 44m, L. Merlino 88m) bt Bathurst '75 0.

FIRST GRADE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	DIF	PTS
Fairfield Bulls	21	16	2	3	45	18	27	50
Hurstville City	23	16	2	5	47	23	24	50
Stanmore Hawks	22	15	2	5	50	23	27	47
Auburn United	23	10	5	8	39	36	3	35
Manly Warringah	23	9	7	7	34	27	7	34
Bathurst'75	22	8	7	7	23	28	-5	31
Penrith Panthers	22	8	5	9	26	26	0	29
Rockdale City Suns	23	9	2	12	42	43	-1	29
Moorebank Sports	22	8	5	9	26	33	-7	29
Illawarra Lions	23	7	7	9	28	28	0	28
AC United	22	6	8	8	34	38	-4	26
Hills United	23	4	5	14	26	53	-27	17
Mt Pritchard	22	4	3	15	30	52	-22	15
Belmore Hercules	21	3	6	12	21	43	-22	15

U/21: Mt Pritchard 4 bt Belmore Hercules 2, Hurstville City 2 bt Manly Warringah 1, Bathurst '75 3 bt Mt Pritchard 0, Moorebank Sports 5 bt Illawarra Lions 2, Manly Warringah 2 (D. Rosenthal 57m) bt Penrith Panthers 1, Hurstville City 6 bt Belmore Hercules 0, AC United 0 drew Hills United 0, Rockdale City Suns 5 bt Auburn United 2, Stanmore Hawks 1 bt Fairfield Bulls 0, Moorebank Sports 2 bt Bathurst '75 0.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	DIF	PTS
Hills United	23	14	5	4	51	21	30	47
Manly Warringah	23	13	5	5	48	26	22	44
Fairfield Bulls	21	12	5	4	69	29	40	41
Rockdale City Suns	23	12	4	7	68	44	25	40
AC United	21	11	6	4	41	26	15	39
Moorebank Sports	22	9	9	4	43	31	12	36
Bathurst '75	23	9	6	8	40	31	9	33
Penrith Panthers	21	8	7	6	36	28	8	31
Auburn United	23	9	3	11	55	61	-6	30
Mt Pritchard	22	8	3	11	43	47	-4	27
Stanmore Hawks	23	8	3	12	34	38	-4	27
Hurstville City	22	8	1	13	35	61	-26	25
Belmore Hercules	21	4	3	14	27	59	-32	15
Illawarra Lions	22	0	0	22	18	106	-88	0

U/18: Mt Pritchard 1 bt Belmore Hercules 0, Bathurst '75 2 bt Mt Pritchard 0, Illawarra Lions 3 bt Moorebank Sports 1, Penrith Panthers 2 bt Manly Warringah 0, AC United 7 bt Rockdale City Suns 3, Belmore Hercules 3 bt Hurstville City 1, AC United 1 drew Hills United 1, Rockdale City Suns 3 bt Auburn United 0, Fairfield Bulls 3 bt Stanmore Hawks 2, Moorebank Sports 3 bt Bathurst '75 1.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	DIF	PTS
Bathurst '75	23	16	4	3	52	24	28	52
Manly Warringah	22	14	3	5	54	21	33	45
Illawarra Lions	22	14	2	6	69	34	35	44
Stanmore Hawks	23	14	2	7	43	28	15	44
Moorebank Sports	23	13	3	7	50	29	21	42
Hills United	23	11	6	6	45	34	11	39
Fairfield Bulls	21	11	2	8	32	32	0	35
Mt Pritchard	22	10	3	9	37	26	11	33
AC United	21	10	3	8	41	32	9	33
Penrith Panthers	21	9	2	10	32	35	-3	29
Rockdale City Suns	22	6	4	12	43	45	-2	22
Belmore Hercules	21	4	1	16	29	67	-38	13
Hurstville City	21	1	4	16	21	71	-50	7
Auburn United	23	0	3	20	18	88	-70	3

DIVISION TWO

	1ST	U/21	U/18
Hajduk Wanderers v Mt Druitt Town Rangers	5-0	5-2	0-4
Sydney District v Parramatta City	3-0	2-1	p/p
Hurstville ZSC v Arncliffe Scots	2-3	3-4	1-2
University of NSW v Liverpool City	2-0	1-2	0-5
Gladesville United v Alexander Warriors	0-3	2-2	3-0
Dulwich Hill v Greystanes	2-0	1-0	0-1
*Gladesville United v Hajduk Wanderers	0-2	0-10	0-1
*Alexander Warriors v Parramatta City			0-3

See pages 22-30 for all the World Cup Match Reports and the most up-to-date pictures.

NSW STATE LEAGUES

Parramatta City 0, Arncliffe Scots 3 bt Hurstville ZSC 2, University of NSW 2 bt Liverpool City 0, Alexander Warriors 3 bt Gladesville United 0, Dulwich Hill 2 bt Greystanes 0.

FIRST GRADE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	DIF	PTS
Dulwich Hill	19	16	3	0	58	16	42	51
Hajduk Wanderers	19	15	4	0	56	10	46	49
Hurstville Zsc	18	10	5	3	41	25	16	35
Sydney District	19	10	0	9	29	33	-4	30
Arncliffe Scots	19	8	2	9	37	37	0	26
Alexander Warriors	18	8	1	9	38	34	4	25
Greystanes	19	7	3	9	30	34	-4	24
Mt Druitt Town	19	5	5	9	31	38	-7	20
Liverpool City	18	4	3	11	19	35	-16	15
Parramatta City	18	4	3	11	22	45	-23	15
Gladesville United	19	3	4	12	25	51	-26	13
Uni Of Nsw	17	4	1	12	15	43	-28	13

U/21: Hajduk Wanderers 10 bt Gladesville United 0, Hajduk Wanderers 5 bt Mt Druitt Town Rangers 2, Sydney District 2 bt Parramatta City 1, Arncliffe Socts 4 bt Hurstville ZSC 3, Liverpool City 2 bt University of NSW 1, Gladesville United 2 drew Alexander Warriors 2, Dulwich Hill 1 bt Greystanes 0.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	DIF	PTS
Hajduk Wanderers	19	16	0	3	94	16	78	48
Greystanes	19	15	1	3	35	19	16	46
Dulwich Hill	19	11	4	4	54	22	32	37
Mt Druitt Town	19	10	4	5	46	30	17	34
Uni of NSW	17	7	3	7	22	22	0	24
Hurstville ZSC	19	7	1	11	37	44	-7	22
Liverpool City	19	5	5	9	34	45	-11	20
Gladesville United	91	5	4	10	28	43	-15	19
Sydney District	19	5	4	10	19	58	-39	19
Parramatta City	18	5	3	10	26	39	-13	18
Alexander Warriors	18	5	2	11	26	47	-21	17
Arncliffe Scots	19	4	3	12	19	56	-37	15

U/18: Hajduk Wanderers 1 bt Gladesville United 0, Parramatta City 3 bt Alexander Warriors 0, Mt Druitt Town Rangers 4 bt Hajduk Wanderers, Arncliffe Scots 2 bt Hurstville ZSC 1, Liverpool City 5 bt University of NSW 0, Gladesville United 3 bt Alexander Warriors 0 (Win by Forfeit), Greystanes 1 bt Dulwich Hill 0.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	DIF	PTS
Mt Druitt Town	19	17	1	1	65	7	58	52
Hajduk Wanderers	19	14	3	2	94	13	81	45
Liverpool City	19	13	2	4	40	14	26	41
Sydney District	18	13	1	4	50	24	26	40
Gladesville United	19	12	2	5	60	18	42	38
Dulwich Hill	19	7	2	10	38	27	11	23
Paramatta City	17	7	1	9	39	37	2	22
Hurstville ZSC	19	5	2	12	22	36	-14	17
Arncliffe Scots	19	4	0	15	19	103	-84	12
Uni of NSW	18	3	1	14	22	49	-27	10
Alexander Warriors	19	0	0	19	4	140	-136	0

First Grade: Granville Greenisland 2 bt Hawkesbury City 1, Maroubra United 3 bt Glebe Wanderers 1, Hawkesbury City 3 bt Granville Greenisland 0, Flamencos 4 bt White City 0, Camden Tigers 1 drew Trasandinos 1, Sydney University 3 bt Prospect United 2, Colo Colo 4 bt Hakoah 3.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	DIF	PTS
Sydney University	17	11	2	4	52	26	26	35
Glebe Wanderers	15	9	4	2	33	19	14	31
Camden Tigers	17	9	3	5	39	34	5	30
Trasandinos	16	7	6	3	29	24	5	27
Colo Colo	16	8	1	7	26	29	-3	25
Maroubra United	16	7	2	7	48	37	11	23
Flamencos	17	6	2	9	32	36	-4	20
White City	17	5	5	7	26	42	-16	20
Granville Greenisland	16	4	5	7	31	43	-12	17
Hakoah	16	5	1	10	27	37	-10	16
Prospect United	15	4	3	8	24	27	-3	15
Hawkesbury City	16	5	0	11	24	37	-13	15

Second Grade: Granville Greenisland 2 bt Hawkesbury City 0, Glebe Wanderers 2 bt Maroubra United 0, Hawkesbury City 4 bt Granville Greenisland 0, Flamencos 7 bt White City 2, Camden Tigers 2 bt Trasandinos 0, Sydney University 1 drew Prospect United 1, Hakoah 4 bt Colo Colo 0.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	DIF	PTS
Flamencos	17	11	2	4	39	23	16	35
Glebe Wanderers	15	8	4	3	26	11	15	28
Sydney University	17	7	6	4	35	23	12	27
Prospect United	15	8	3	4	25	14	11	27
White City	17	8	2	7	39	34	5	26
Trasandinos	16	7	3	6	27	27	0	24
Colo Colo	16	7	3	6	28	31	-3	24
Camden Tigers	17	6	4	7	30	30	0	22
Granville Greenisland	16	5	4	7	21	24	-3	19
Hakoah	16	4	3	9	19	35	-16	15
Maroubra United	16	4	1	11	20	43	-23	13
Hawkesbury City	16	3	3	10	15	29	-14	12

DIV 4: First Grade: Fraser Park 2 bt United Eagles 0, Balmain Tigers 1 drew Marrickville 1, Fairfield Kings 1 bt Sydney Crescent Star 0, CSI Schofields 5 bt Lithgow Workmens 0, Holy Cross Ryde 1 drew Springwood 1, Fraser Park 2 bt Nepean District 1, Prairiewood United 1 drew St Josephs 1, United Eagles 2 bt Earlwood Hermes 1.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	DIF	PTS
Fraser Park	18	14	3	1	49	13	36	45
Prairiewood United	17	9	8	0	44	22	22	35
Holy Cross Ryde	17	9	5	3	37	18	18	32
Sydney Crescent Star	17	10	2	5	35	26	9	32
Marrickville	18	7	6	4	35	23	12	27
Nepean District	18	8	3	6	26	21	5	27
Fairfield City Kings	17	7	5	65	32	19	13	26
St Josephs	17	6	6	54	29	33	-4	24
CSI Schofields	16	6	2	6	30	30	0	23
Balmain Tigers	17	5	4	8	35	31	4	19
Springwood	17	5	3	9	33	35	-2	18
United Eagles	17	3	7	7	24	30	-6	16
Lithgow Workmen's	18	2	1	15	19	65	-46	7
Earlwood Hermes	16	0	1	15	12	74	-62	1

Second Grade: Fraser Park 2 drew United Eagles 2, Balmain Tigers 6 bt Marrickville 1, Fairfield Kings 3 bt Sydney Crescent Star 1, CSI Schofields 3 bt Lithgow Workmens 0 (Win by Forfeit), Holy Cross Ryde 3 bt Springwood 0, Fraser Park 1 bt Nepean District 0, Prairiewood United 5 bt St Josephs 2, United Eagles 3 bt Earlwood Hermes 0 (Win by Forfeit).

	P	W	D	L	F	A	DIF	PTS
Fraser Park	18	11	6	1	42	20	22	39
Nepean District	18	12	2	4	53	143	39	38
Balmain Tigers	16	8	4	3	35	5	20	32
Holy Cross Ryde	17	8	5	4	35	22	13	29
Marrickville	18	9	2	6	41	33	8	29
Springwood	17	8	4	5	49	28	21	28
Prairiewood United	18	8	4	6	45	33	12	28
CSI Schofields	17	7	4	6	36	32	5	25
Fairfield City Kings	17	6	4	7	32	39	-7	22
St Josephs	17	5	3	9	34	63	-29	18
United Eagles	17	5	3	9	34	63	-29	18
Lithgow Workmen's	18	5	2	11	32	55	-23	17
Earlwood Hermes	16	3	0	13	91	48	-29	9
Sydney Crescent Star	17	3	0	14	31	76	-45	9

DIV 5: First Grade: Kosciuzsko 4 bt Bossy 2, Auburn Star 2 bt Liverpool Olympic 1, White Valley 1 bt AVA United 0, Eastern Creek Pioneers 3 bt Homenetmen 2, Racing 1 drew Sporting SSC 1.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	DIF	PTS
Auburn Star	14	8	4	2	31	154	16	28
Eastern Creek Pioneer	12	7	4	1	26	16	11	25
White Valley	14	6	4	3	22	15	6	25
Sporting SCC	16	5	5	6	27	31	-4	20
AVA United	14	5	4	56	32	26	6	19
Racing	14	3	8	3	23	18	5	17
Kosciusko	13	7	2	4	33	27	6	16
Homenetmen	15	4	4	7	29	39	-10	16
Bossy	14	3	6	5	21	26	-5	15
Liverpool Olympic	14	2	7	5	21	21	0	13
Liverpool Warriors	14	1	2	11	12	44	-32	5

Second Grade: Kosciuzsko 4 bt Bossy 2, Liverpool Olympic 6 bt Auburn Star 2, AVA United 3 bt White Valley 0, Homenetmen 5 bt Eastern Creek Pioneers 2, Racing 2 drew Sporting SCC 2.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	DIF	PTS
AVA United	14	10	0	4	33	18	15	30
Sporting SCC	15	9	2	4	39	30	9	29
Auburn Star	14	9	1	4	46	27	19	28
White Valley	14	8	3	3	36	21	15	27
Eastern Creek Pioneer	12	8	1	3	31	18	13	25
Liverpool Olympic	14	7	3	4	32	20	12	24
Racing	14	5	1	8	32	31	1	16
Kosciusko	13	4	4	5	30	35	-5	16
Homenetmen	15	4	2	9	26	38	-11	14
Liverpool Warriors	14	1	2	11	9	42	-33	5
Bossy	13	1	1	11	8	43	-35	4

WOMEN'S STATE LEAGUE DIVISION ONE

First Grade: Sutherland Sharks 2 bt Gladesville Ravens 1, NNSW ITC/Academy 2 bt Marconi Fairfield 0, Sydney United 3 bt Moorebank Sports 0, Nepean Panthers vs NSW INST/Academy p/p, UWS Macarthur 2 bt Eastern Suburbs 0, Sydney United 4 bt Moorebank Sports 1.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	DIF	PTS
Nsw Inst/Academy	13	11	2	0	70	7	63	35
Nnsw Itc/Academy	13	10	3	0	51	5	46	33
Sydney United	14	10	1	3	63	15	48	31
Sutherland Sharks	14	9	2	3	37	13	24	29
Marconi Fairfield	14	8	3	3	60	14	46	27
Gladesville Ravens	13	5	0	8	19	47	-28	15
Uws Macarthur	15	5	0	10	28	60	-32	15
Moorebank Sports	12	2	0	10	11	52	-41	6
Nepean Panthers	13	1	2	10	13	70	-57	5
Eastern Suburbs	15	0	1	14	7	76	-69	1

Second Grade: Sutherland Sharks 3 bt Gladesville Ravens 0, Sydney United 2 bt Moorebank Sports 0, Nepean Panthers vs NSW INST/Academy p/p, Eastern Suburbs 5 bt UWS Macarthur 0, Sydney United 4 bt Moorebank Sports 1.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	DIF	PTS
Marconi Fairfield	13	10	2	1	37	7	30	32
Sutherland Sharks	14	10	1	3	62	14	48	31
Sydney United	14	9	2	3	51	14	37	29
NNSW ITC/Academy	12	9	1	2	50	12	38	28
Gladesville Ravens	13	8	2	3	35	14	21	26
Eastern Suburbs	15	6	3	6	22	17	5	21
NSW INST/Academy	13	5	0	8	35	27	8	15
Moorebank Sports	12	2	0	10	7	41	-34	6
UWS Macarthur	15	1	1	13	4	86	-82	4
Nepean Panthers	13	1	0	12	8	79	-71	3

DIV 2: Roselands 3 bt Gladesville Ravens 0, Manly Warringah 4 bt Bankstown City 0, Central Coast WSA 4 bt Sutherland Shire 1, St George Association 3 bt Bathurst City 0 (Win by Forfeit), Shoalhaven Association 1 drew Wollongong City 1.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	DIF	PTS
Central Coast Wsa	15	14	1	0	68	12	56	43
St George Assoc	15	10	3	2	40	14	26	33
Manly Warringah	15	10	2	3	43	23	20	32
Shoalhaven Assoc	15	9	4	2	47	14	33	31
Bathurst City	15	6	2	7	39	32	7	20
Roselands	14	5	4	5	32	33	-1	19
Wollongong City	15	2	4	9	16	31	-15	10
Gladesville Ravens	13	2	2	9	8	27	-19	8
Sutherland Shire	14	2	1	11	23	50	-27	7
Bankstown City	13	0	1	12	10	90	-80	1

NSW Soccer Federation

SUPER LEAGUE

ROUND 20

Saturday July 18

Central Coast v Macarthur Rams
Pluim Park, 6pm

Sunday July 19

Ryde City v Parramatta Eagles
Wentworth Park, 3pm

Sutherland Sharks v St George Saints
Seymour Shaw Park, 3pm

Canterbury M/ville v Leichhardt Tigers
Henson Park, 3pm

Bankstown City v Blacktown City
Jensen Park, 3pm

Bonnyrigg W.E. v Eastern Suburbs
Serbian Centre, 3pm

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WITH JANENE MAR

AWSA NATIONAL JUNIOR CHAMPIONSHIP

THE FUTURE'S LOOKING GRAND

From witnessing the talent on display at the National Junior Championship over the week, the future of soccer in this country is certainly looking grand. The standard of football produced by these 12 to 16 year olds was outstanding.

The level of skill, athleticism, tactics and understanding of the game was more than a pleasure to watch and by all accounts has improved at a great rate.

It is easy to forget just how young these players are, and there are exciting times ahead indeed as they continue to mature and learn.

Although copping numerous heavy defeats, Tasmania played with great spirit and enjoyment, and battled hard throughout the tournament. The Tassies were led admirably by veteran captain Shelley Cook who covered so much territory in every game and showed great talent, scoring a couple of great goals, plus one brilliant first time side volley which was disallowed offside.

Victoria too were on the wrong end of some big scorelines, but also gained the respect of their opponents for never giving up until the final whistle. Playing with plenty of heart, the Victorians would run all day.

The ACT side provided a tough opponent and performed well, but lacked the depth of quality players to go on with the job and truly threaten the top teams. Unlucky to go down to Queensland on Day Two, the ACT played admirably in their last match, finishing the tournament with a draw against Northern NSW, which effectively ruined Northern's chances of making the final. Attackers Kim Channing and Caitlin Munoz were the obvious talents in the ACT side.

The young NSW team showed some great talent, capable of stringing together some surging attacking moves. They were perhaps a little inexperienced to consistently produce good performances, and went off the boil in the more crucial matches and were unable to make the adjustment.

Northern NSW looked very impressive early in the week but were inconsistent and fell away with a couple of flat performances when it mattered. The midfield is Northern's strength, with Ashley Wilson also possessing top scoring abilities. Rachael Alley, Tara McMinn and Meegan Shepherd also made strong contributions in the halves.

After an average start to the week against SA, then fortunate to take the three points against ACT, Queensland steadily improved to become a most impressive and entertaining team.

Backed up by a very solid backline, the Maroons were capable of some unstoppable runs in attack.

Most outstanding from out on the flank was Lana Harch, while Prue Cormie at the back was consistently reliable and also contributed strongly to the attack.

South Australia are a fantastic combination with their strongest asset being their work as a team unit. Exceptionally well drilled, comfortable and effective on the ball, each member of the team knows her assigned job on the park and works hard off the ball. There are no weak links in any position, and the brand of football is pleasing to watch.

The hub of the SA side is their central midfield, the diminutive Stacey Stocco with brilliant awareness, skill and distribution, and Erin O'Shea displaying great strength, positioning and a mean shot. The fantastic week's football came to the most dramatic of finishes, the top four teams all in contention for the final, with the last two round-robin matches on the Friday to decide each one's fate as the four played against each other.

After surprisingly dropping points in a scoreless draw the previous day, Northern NSW had the hardest assignment, needing to win by four clear goals against SA. The challenge was too great and the clash ended in a draw.

NSW were in a must-win situation in their encounter with Queensland, with the home side needing only a draw to make the final. Queensland proved too strong and in taking the three points, leapfrogged SA to claim the Association Trophy with first position on the ladder.

RESULTS

DAY ONE — SUNDAY 5 JULY

SOUTH AUSTRALIA 2 (Erin O'Shea 20, 54) defeated QUEENSLAND 1 (Lana Harch 62)

ACT 2 (Kim Channing 3, Kim Hopper 29) drew with VICTORIA 2 (Diane Jansen 2, Selin Kuralay 31)

NORTHERN NSW 5 (Ashley Wilson 26 57 60, Amanda Brennan 68, Rachel Alley 70) defeated TASMANIA 1 (Shelley Cook 66)

NEW SOUTH WALES 1 (Katherine Wilson 61) drew with SOUTH AUSTRALIA 1 (Rebecca Morrison 26)

DAY TWO — MONDAY 6 JULY

NORTHERN NSW 3 (Ashley Wilson 7, Amber Neilson 31, Julie King 50) defeated VICTORIA 0

QLD 1 (Lauren Kerr 20) defeated ACT 0

NEW SOUTH WALES 6 (Angela Murphy 20, Bernadette Madden 37 47, Jessica Syne 48, Joanne Northcote 52, Nicole Kimber 62) defeated TASMANIA 0

DAY THREE — TUESDAY 7 JULY

QLD 3 (Lana Harch 3m, Prue Cormie 28m, own goal 54m) defeated NORTHERN NSW 1 (Rachel Alley 71m)

NEW SOUTH WALES 5 (Angela Murphy 5m 6m, Jessica Syne 36m 66m, Amanda Ghorra 54m) defeated VICTORIA 0

SOUTH AUSTRALIA 2 (Rebecca Morrison 5m, Belinda Gawlik 46m) defeated ACT 0

QLD 5 (Prue Cormie 2m, Sarah Blackwell 34m, Sarah Chandler 55m 58m, Lana Harch 60m) defeated TASMANIA 0

DAY FOUR — WEDNESDAY 8 JULY

NORTHERN NSW 2 (Ashley Wilson 43m, Amy Baldwin 57m) defeated NEW SOUTH WALES 1 (Sarah Hudson 12m)

ACT 5 (Carina Santosuosso 7m, Kim Channing 20m 25m 51m, Katrina Stanniforth 61m) defeated TASMANIA 0

SOUTH AUSTRALIA 6 (Erin O'Shea 15m 41m, Abbey Dunn 24m, Rebecca Morrison 35m, Kristy-Ann Parsons 37m, Tanya Harrison 45m) defeated VICTORIA 0

DAY FIVE — THURSDAY 9 JULY

NEW SOUTH WALES 2 (Nicole Kimber 34m, Emma Davison 61m) defeated ACT 0

SOUTH AUSTRALIA 4 (Amanda Altschwager 1m, Erin O'Shea 17m, Heather Coverdale 18m, Rebecca Morrison 49m) defeated TASMANIA 0

QLD 6 (Lana Harch 17m 23m 75m, Lauren Kerr 25m 30m, Karla Reuter 51m) defeated VICTORIA 1 (Chrissy Baxendale 7m)

ACT 0 drew with NORTHERN NSW 0

DAY SIX — FRIDAY 10 JULY

VICTORIA 3 (Yvette Muscat 20m, Burcu Alpozgen 34m, Anthea Vardakas 55m) defeated TASMANIA 1 (Shelley Cook 25m)

NORTHERN NSW 1 (Amy Baldwin 55m) drew with SOUTH AUSTRALIA 1 (Rebecca Morrison 12m)

QLD 2 (Prue Cormie 24m 35m) defeated NEW SOUTH WALES 0

FINAL — SATURDAY 11 JULY

SOUTH AUSTRALIA 2 (Heather Coverdale 15m, Rebecca Morrison 64m) defeated QLD 0

FAIR PLAY AWARD

NEW SOUTH WALES

MOST VALUABLE PLAYER (MVP)

INGRID KOSLOW (TAS)

SOUTH AUSTRALIA BACKS UP FOR SECOND TITLE

South Australia took the honours in Saturday's final of the AWSA National Junior Championship in Southport, comfortably defeating host State Queensland 2-0.

The defending champion South Australia retains the title, adding to their 1997 crown which was their first ever National Championship victory. This second win against a greater number of top level teams, proves last year's result was no fluke, and the small State of SA is doing great things with the elite development of its young footballers.

For the championship decider, SA was happy to see the return of midfield sensation Stacey Stocco, absent from the previous two matches with bad bruising to the foot. Queenland however were behind the eightball from the start, missing their star wide goal creator and scorer Lana Harch through a back problem.

AUSTRALIAN WOMEN'S SOCCER ASSOCIATION

After a nervous start from both teams which saw an unusual number of stray passes, Queensland pushed forward in search of an early goal. A long range freekick was sent flying over the crossbar, before a promising attack up the right flank ended with SA keeper pull in the resultant cross.

SA then took the lead in the 15th minute. A huge long throw-in from SA's Rebecca Morrison was missed by the goalkeeper, under challenge in the air. The ball popped up, falling nicely for the unmarked Heather Coverdale, volleying home from 10 metres into the open net. The visitors celebrated the goal as keeper Naomi Lewis lay injured on the ground. Carried off soon after, Queensland suffered their second big blow.

SA repeated the same ploy minutes later, testing substitute goalkeeper Jessica Hall with another Morrison long throw. This time the ball fell invitingly for sharpshooting midfielder Erin O'Shea who without hesitation smashed the ball from 20 metres. The strike had Hall beaten, but could only find the base of the goalpost, Hall recovering to pounce on the loose crumbs.

Queensland then started to pick up some momentum with SA starting to look tired, but their usual attacking forays up the flanks were not in existence, and resorted to playing too many long balls which were happily gathered in by SA keeper Emma Wirkus. The home side's best chance was created by fullback Debbie McPherson, trying her luck with a fantastic strike from 35 metres which sailed just over the crossbar, five minutes before the break.

With Queensland having trouble penetrating the organised opposition defence, SA regained control in midfield and applied pressure in attack, creating several promising chances. Their lead was then doubled in the 64th minute from a quick counterattack, a long ball played forward from half-way, with the athletic Morrison winning the race against her marker. Keeping her cool and rounding the outcoming keeper, Morrison slotted into the empty net from close range.

The two goal scoreline was to prove too great a hurdle for Queensland to overcome in the dying minutes, the final whistle signalling title number two to the South Australian outfit.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA: Emma Wirkus, Chichi May, Sandra Slimani, Belinda Gawlik, Kristy-Ann Parsons, Michelle Halfpenny, Erin O'Shea, Stacey Stocco, Abbey Dunn, Heather Coverdale, Rebecca Morrison. Subs - Tanya Harrison, Amanda Altschwager, Ann Marie Vozzo, Sarah Baker. Reserves - Christie Chandler, Jordie Hinks.

QUEENSLAND: Naomi Lewis, Bree Best, Debbie McPherson, Prue Cormie, Danielle Allen, Margaret Rodd, Sarah Chandler, Alexis Tramacchi, Karla Place, Sarah Blackwell, Lauren Kerr. Subs - Jessica Hall, Kerryn Biles, Karla Reuter, Wendy McCarthy, Emily Corbett. Reserves - Angela Naumann, Lana Harch.

WOMEN'S SUPER LEAGUE

UWS MACARTHUR RAMS

The UWS and Macarthur Rams clubs are proud to announce a merger of their women's soccer programs, and will play in the 1999 Women's Super League conducted by the NSW Soccer Federation Limited as UWS Macarthur Rams.

The Board of Directors of both clubs after careful planning are certain that the new club will be a force in women's soccer and provide a career path for all players, especially for the junior development programs in the area.

The UWS Macarthur Rams will be coached by high profile coach Peter Davies and administered by the well-known women's soccer identity, Rob Laws. With the expertise of all parties, this will be an exciting time for all involved with the UWS Macarthur Rams.

Any players wishing to know more about the club and opportunities offered are welcome to contact Rob Laws on **9618 3928 (W) or 9605 5809 (H).**

SOCCER CANBERRA

UNIT 2/3 PHIPPS CLOSE, DEAKIN, ACT. 2600 PH: 06 260 4000 FAX: 06 260 4999

Information Line: 1902 220 074 (Calls charged at 50c min – higher rates for mobile public telephones)
Internet Home Page HTTP: WWW.ACTSF.ORC.AU

By Graham Cooke

NINE-GOAL OLYMPIC CLOSES GAP

Veteran Baz Giampaolo scored a hat-trick as Canberra Olympic went on a nine-goal rampage against University of Canberra in the ACT Premier League at the weekend.

Coach Vic Fernandez praised his men for showing patience and maturity in the game. "I don't really like to see such one-sided results, but we may well need this for our goal difference at the end of the season," he said.

Olympic is now the highest scoring team in the league, with the grim early-season days, when Fernandez was struggling to put three teams on the park each Sunday, a fading memory.

Apart from the 39-year-old Giampaolo, David Arranz (2), Alex Castro (2), Robert Grande, and Pino Seminara from the penalty spot were Olympic's scorers. Mark Dowling was the University's solitary scorer.

Both the leading teams faltered. Belconnen United looked to be cruising when Matt Whyte and Scott Manson gave it a 2-0 lead against Canberra Deakin at half time, but Deakin came back strongly after the interval to tie up the game through Anthony Barac and Marcello Munoz.

United coach Lino Fioreze said it was a point his team could ill-afford to lose. "We dominated the first half and I had every expectation of going on with it in the second, but it wasn't to be," he said.

Second-placed Monaro could take no advantage of United's slip-up when it could only draw, 1-1 with lowly Canberra City.

It took a Danny Serena goal in the last quarter of an hour to spare Monaro from an embarrassing loss, after Willie Stirton had given City the lead just before half time. And to cap it all, Monaro missed a penalty.

"We're going through a bad patch," coach Ian Heywood said. "But we're still undefeated even though six of our results have been score-draws."

Weston Creek Royals kept its hopes of a top-four spot flickering when it came out on top 3-2 against Gungahlin Juventus in a game which was crucial to both sides.

The men who made the difference were striker Steve Lazzari who scored two and had a hand in the third, and goalkeeper Steve Wilkinson, returning from injury with a string of outstanding saves.

He needed to as Juventus dominated for long periods of the game, a situation which left both coaches emotionally exhausted.

The Creek's Jimmy Bland said his team had made mistakes, but had kept them to a minimum in crucial situations. "We are a young team, but we are learning fast," he said.

"And today we had a good examination on how to play under pressure."

Juventus team boss Walter Valeri said he could not remember a game in which his team had dominated so much and lost. "At the end of the day it's about scoring, and they went one better than us," he said.

Steve Lazzari and Robert Paragalli put the Creek 2-0 up at half time, but Juventus came back through Lou Gaspari and Oscar Zamora before Lazarri decided the game with a spectacular volley in the 71st minute.

In a rugged contest at O'Connor Oval, Capital City Suns won the derby between the two mainly Macedonian-supported teams 4-3 against Queanbeyan City.

Referee Chris Conte sent three players off (two from Queanbeyan) and there were some minor scuffles in the 200-strong crowd. The police were called but were not needed.

The game took much the same course as the first-round contest between the two which ended 6-4 in the Suns' favour. This time the Suns went into an early lead, Queanbeyan pulled it back to 3-3 before substitute Steve Lee grabbed the winner.

Earlier Ilija Prenzoski, Boban Petrov and Shane Lyons had scored for the Suns, with Yuki Onda; Simon Aitichison, and Pat Phommaseisy netting for Queanbeyan.

RASIC SEEKS OVERSEAS LINKS

Canberra Cosmos coach Rale Rasic is seeking to forge links with his club and English Premier Division newcomer Charlton Athletic.

He believes the Londoners have much to offer the Cosmos, not least in the example they set by forging links with their local community.

Rasic, who was in England during the run-up to the World Cup, said he would like to see a deal done whereby Charlton has an option on all Cosmos players who wanted to pursue overseas careers.

In return, the English club would cooperate in things like coaching exchanges, and goalkeeping schools, and would undertake to make a tour here.

"I was extremely impressed by the set-up at Charlton," he said.

"The club realises the giant step it is making from the first division to the Premier League, and is preparing for it in a very professional way."

He also confirmed his assistant this season will be a former star from the days of Canberra's first National League venture, Tony Brennan.

He said Brennan will take the title of staff coach, and will play a crucial role in areas of motivation.

"Tony was a stunning success as a player in the NSL with Brisbane and Canberra," Rasic said. "He will bring his very special qualities to the job, and I know he will do it well."

Brennan has taken charge of teams in the ACT competition, but is currently involved only at junior level.

Meanwhile, the Cosmos coach is close to making the finishing touches to his squad with trials currently continuing among players seeking to join.

"I have 25 people taking part and the quality is exceptionally good," he said. "I also expect to be looking at two players from overseas, one a Portuguese and the other a Ghanian.

"There is also the possibility of a return of a couple of Canberra players who are currently with other clubs."

OUNDLE'S LONG TREK TO THE KANGA CUP

It was a case of speech day on Saturday and the plane on Sunday for the 26 boys and two staff of English school Oundle which entered two teams in last week's Kanga Cup junior competition in Canberra.

Manager-coach Max Taylor said the tour was a new venture for the rugby and cricket playing school where boys are not even allowed to take up soccer until they reach the sixth form.

"We have a former teacher now in Sydney who has remained in contact with us so we thought 'why not?', he said.

"He actually suggested we time the trip to Australia to coincide with the Kanga Cup, and we haven't regretted it. I have been impressed by the standard of our opponents. There are obviously some very good coaches around."

Belnorth Gold, of Canberra, comes away with the ball after a period of sustained attacking by the visiting Georgian team, Sikharuli, during the Kanga Cup international youth competition, played in Canberra last week. Sikharuli won the game for 11-year-olds 2-1.

The 17 years team from Oundle School, near Northampton, in England after it played a 0-0 draw with Kings School (Sydney) in the Kanga Cup international youth competition, played in Canberra last week.

After the Kanga Cup the party was visiting North Queensland for some relaxation before playing four games in Sydney and two in Kuala Lumpur on the return journey.

While Oundle, which entered the 17 and 16 years section, got to Australia on a conventional airline flight, the prize for persistance must go to a team from Tirana, in Albania, which was all set to go until refused visas by the Australian Government.

Apparently the Department of Immigration feared the 15 and 16-year-olds would attempt to defect.

and managers travelled overland from Georgia to Turkey, then by plane to South Korea and Sydney, with a bus to Canberra — in all four days of continuous travel.

But the saddest tale belongs to a team from Tirana, in Albania, which was all set to go until refused visas by the Australian Government.

NOVELL ACT P/L

Division One

Round 11 Sunday, July 19

Canberra Olympic	v	Belconnen United	O'Connor Oval
Canberra Deakin	v	Canberra City	Deakin Oval
Queanbeyan City	v	Uni of Canberra	High Street
Gungahlin Juventus	v	Capital City Suns	Jamison Oval
Weston Creek Royals	v	Monaro	Woden Park Oval

Division Two

Round 15 Saturday, July 18

Defence Academy	v	ANU	Addison Road
White Eagles	v	Burns Club	Hughes Oval No 1 (1)
Tuggeranong United	v	Canberra Defence	Kambah Oval No 2 (1)
O'Connor Knights	v	Cooma	O'Connor Oval

Division 1

Belconnen United	2	Canberra Deakin	2
Monaro	1	Canberra City	1
Uni of Canberra	1	Canberra Olympic	9
Capital City Suns	4	Queanbeyan City	3
Weston Creek Royals	3	Gungahlin Juventus	2

	P	W	SD	D	L	F	A	PTS
Belconnen United	11	7	3	0	1	29	12	27
Monaro	11	5	6	0	0	26	13	27
Canberra Olympic	11	7	2	0	2	31	18	25
Capital City Suns	11	6	3	0	2	29	21	24
Weston Creek Royals	11	6	1	0	4	24	20	20
Canberra Deakin	11	3	4	1	3	15	14	18
Gungahlin Juventus	11	4	2	1	4	23	15	17
Canberra City	11	2	1	0	8	16	28	8
Queanbeyan City	11	1	2	0	8	22	39	7
Uni of Canberra	11	0	2	0	9	9	41	4

Golden Boot (after Round 10)

Peter Buljan	**Capital City Suns**	**9**
Marko Perinovic	Belconnen United	9
Matt Valeri	Gungahlin Juventus	8
Marcello Fernandez	Canberra Olympic	7
Scott Manson	Belconnen United	7
Steve Lazzari	Weston Creek Royals	7

Under 23: Belconnen United 1 Canberra Deakin 1, Monaro 0 Canberra City 2, University of Canberra 5 Canberra Olympic 3, Capital City Suns 2 Queanbeyan City 2, Weston Creek Royals 1 Gungahlin Juventus 0.

Points: Gungahlin Juventus 29, Belconnen United 22, Canberra Deakin 22, University of Canberra 21, Queanbeyan City 17, Weston Creek Royals 17, Canberra City 16, Capital City Suns 13, Monaro 11, Canberra Olympic 0.

Youth League: Weston Creek Royals 4 Canberra City 1, Belconnen Strikers 0 Canberra Deakin 2, Queanbeyan City 0 Canberra Olympic 7, Capital City Suns 2 Radford 2.

Points: Belconnen United 29, Weston Creek Royals 26, University of Canberra 25, Canberra Deakin 25, Gungahlin Juventus 19, Capital City Suns 17, Tuggeranong United 15, Belconnen Strikers 15, Radford 15, St Edmunds 14, Canberra City 13, Goulburn City 9, Canberra Olympic 3, Queanbeyan City 2.

Division 2

White Eagles	1	ANU	2
Tuggeranong United	0	Burns Club	3
Cooma	1	Canberra Defence	1

	P	W	SD	D	L	F	A	Pts
ANU	13	10	1	0	2	34	18	32
Burns Club	13	10	0	0	3	24	20	30
White Eagles	14	8	0	0	6	32	19	24
Cooma	13	5	3	0	5	32	19	21
O'Connor Knights	10	6	0	0	4	13	16	18
Tuggeranong United	13	5	1	0	7	25	32	17
Defence Academy	13	3	0	0	10	18	35	9
Canberra Defence	11	0	1	0	10	6	44	2

Reserves: Tuggeranong United 1 Burns Club 2, Cooma 0 Canberra Defence 1.

Points: ANU 34, White Eagles 26, Defence Academy 26, Burns Club 22, Tuggeranong United 17, O'Connor Knights 16, Canberra Defence 10, Cooma 5.

ACT STATE LEAGUE

Division 1: Monaro 3 Belwest 4
Division 2: ANU II 2 Gungahlin Juventus 3.
Division 4: University of Canberra 3 Tuggeranong United 1.
Masters Division: Canberra City 1 Kambah Old Boys 2.

Victorian Soccer Federation

HERE COMES THE CAVALRY

HEIDELBERG 1
GREEN GULLY 6

By Dwyght Tuffnell

Heidelberg United's recent recovery in the league counted for very little on Sunday when it was beaten 6-1 by Green Gully Cavaliers, a result which all but condemns the Bergers to relegation.

Heidelberg can still mathematically stay up, but even victories against St Albans and Fawkner in its last two games probably won't guarantee survival.

On Sunday, Heidelberg were well in the game until the second half when a burst of five goals in 17 minutes left them with no chance.

Daniel Genovesi had give the Cavaliers the lead early in the first half.

A John Dimitrelos goal in the 55th minute signalled a Cavaliers charge and every attack from then on seemed to bring a goal.

Peter Spiteri was the next to find the target in the 63rd minute and just two minutes later Zlatko Donev made it 4-0.

In the 68th, Genovesi added his second and Nick Papadopoulos, chief provider for most of the previous goals, found the net himself shortly after.

George Lenetis pulled back one in the 73rd minute but not even that lone strike could restore any pride on a sad day for the former great club.

United: Jevdjevic, Makris, Canosa (Medjedovic), Grigorakis, Hasler, Svigos, Lenetis, Georgiadis, Tsoumerkas (Tsonis), Anastasiou, Harbis (Amiridis).

Cavaliers: Vella, Dimitrelos (Tribuzio), Kovacevic (Neceski), Spiteri, Papadopoulos, Brown, Didulica, Mangos, Donev, Genovesi, Markovac (Cuzzupe).

Votes: 3- Papadopoulos (GG), 2- Brown (GG), 1- Donev (GG)

KEOGH KINGS' INSPIRATION

BULLEEN 1
SUNSHINE 0

By Bert Van Bedaf

Bulleen Inter Kings moved up to third place on the Premier League table with a 1-0 over Sunshine Georgies at the Veneto Club on Sunday.

The Kings victory capped off an impressive run at home, where they have remained undefeated, in fact, they have not lost at the Veneto Club since round 16 last season.

Danny Gnjidic scored the only goal, but the Kings did leave it a bit late.

It wasn't until the 83rd minute when substitute Damon Collina, who made an immediate impact once he came on, played the ball through to Robert Stojcevski whose cross was driven into the net by Gnjidic.

Before that, Sunshine had had plenty of opportunities but failed to convert.

Kings 'keeper Sean Keogh was outstanding, making crucial saves from Ilija Dragicevic and Anthony Magnacca in the first half.

Bulleen had the better of the chances in the second half but couldn't find the net until the Gnjidic goal.

Eric Hollingsworth and John Waddell both came close and Keogh performed more heroics denying Pece Siveski late in the game.

Kings: Keogh, Valentic (D.Collina), Everetts (Tartaglia), Della Rocca, Mazzini, Atanasovski, Waddell, Gnjidic, Grbac, Hollingsworth, Stojcevski.

Georgies: Wardle, Byrne, Kanesoulis, Krajacic, De Bono, Gurpinar, Siveski, Opazo (Komadina), Vassallo, Dragicevic, Magnacca.

Votes: 3- Atanasovski (BK), 2- Dragicevic (SG), 1- Keogh (BK).

MUDDY DRAW

THOMASTOWN 0
ST ALBANS 0

By George Koukeris

Thomastown Zebras held off league leaders St Albans Saints at Partridge Reserve on Sunday in a goalless game played in slippery conditions with a heavy ball.

In the tenth minute, Thomastown broke through St Albans' defence. Nick Cuculevski darted on the right side and crossed low and accurately towards goal where 'keeper Marijan Vunderl grabbed the ball in front of Nick Lazarevski but dropped it.

Lazarevski was poised to strike home but couldn't connect with 20 pounds of mud stuck to his boot.

St Albans bounced back with similar aggression. A defensive clearance by Joe Cuze found leading scorer Hrvoje Karl in the centre who passed to Mark Silic on the run into the area but Zebras 'keeper Robert Manzella thwarted the attack with a brilliant save.

The Saints found things not going their way. After many frustrating attempts at goal, they seemed to become more unsettled and lapsed in concentration with the job at hand.

The Zebras, having dominated possession, made no interchange until the 73rd minute where key utility Mohamed El Kersh replaced a tired Lazarevski.

George Jolevski gave the young striker a good chance to score but he was denied by a great save from Vunderl.

Zebras: Manzella, Jolevski, Angelovski, Grganovic, De Propetis, Cuculevski, Boschini, Slifkas, Lazarevski (El Kersh), Lingurovski, Gasparini.

Saints: Vunderl, I.Rados, Cuze, Magdic, S.Rados, Silic, Raspudic, Karl (Kirichian), Sianidis, Katouik (J.Kozic), Razov.

Votes: 3- Lingurovski (TZ), 2- S.Rados (StA), 1- Jolevski (TZ)

SOUTH UNLUCKY NOT TO WIN

SPRINGVALE WE 1
SOUTH DANDENONG 1

By Milan Ninovic

South Dandenong picked up a precious point away to Springvale White Eagles on Sunday, but they would have left regretting not taking all three.

In a high standard attacking game, South Dandy hit the woodwork twice and had several other good opportunities to wrap up the points.

Viktor Memeti and Peter Di Iorio came close but fell behind to a Marijan Marinkovic goal in the 37th minute.

Reshat Mezensof equalised for South Dandy six minutes into the second half, heading home a cross from Justin Geri.

From then on, it was the visitors who looked likely to win the game.

Memeti missed another chance in the 68th minute hitting the outside of the post.

Geri was then denied by a Zoran Kitanovski goal line clearance before White Eagles 'keeper Robert Brian pulled off a fantastic double save in the 85th minute.

Two minutes from time Geri came close again, but this time his shot hit the crossbar.

White Eagles: Brian, Wallace (V.De La Plaza), R.Marinkovic, Kuzmanovic (Styczen), Kitanovski, Nikolic, M.Marinkovic, Burlak, Calomino, Di Iorio (Seci), Culibrk.

South: Bradford, Dzaferovski (Corallo), Bell, May, Geri, Savage, Muriqi, Memeti, Villani, Mezensof, Memedovski.

Votes: 3- Culibrk (SWE), 2- Geri (SD), 1- Brian (SWE)

EMSOVSKI BRILLIANCE KEEPS PORT IN TOP 5

PORT MELBOURNE 1
PRESTON 2

By John Rigas

Port Melbourne Sharks' run without a victory extended to four games, this time falling to the hands of Preston Lions 1-2 at Anderson Reserve on Sunday.

Preston had the upper hand in the opening half, lead by captain and playmaker Chris Emsovski.

Emsovski opened the scoring in the 22nd minute with a thunderous strike from 35 metres that went in off the woodwork.

On the stroke of half time Emsovski added a second goal when he robbed Roddy Vargas to run into a one-on-one opportunity with Sam Frangos, Emsovski expertly pushed the ball past the goalkeeper.

In the 48th minute Port Melbourne pulled a goal back through a header by Nick Palamaras who was unmarked at the far post.

Port had defender John-Paul Knezevic sent off in the 86th minute after two bookable offences.

Sharks: Frangos, Latinopoulos, R. Vargas, Caimakamis, Tsirtsakis, Tsaltas, Heath, Knezevic, Tsiakos (Livanopoulos), Palamaras, Karakyrakos (Giaccherini).

Lions: Acevski, Drogriski, Lisolajski, Dimovski, Markovski, Burlak, Filipovski, Ivanov, Emsovski, Talevski, Smirnis.

Votes: 3- Emsovski (PL) 2- Frangos (PMS), 1- Ivanov (PL)

In the two other Premier League games at the weekend, Fawkner Blues gained a point at Paisley Park against Altona Magic, but still have a hard job ahead of them to make the top five.

Altona took the lead in the 38th minute. Magic's leading scorer Sash Becvinovski was on the end of a John Sapazovski cross to net his 20th goal of the season.

Fawkner rallied to equalise in the 61st minute, Santo Emmanuele scored after a one-two with Tamer Simsek.

Magic: McGrath, Vasilevski, Tasevski (Bogdanovski), Runje, Markovski, Fak, Rusmir, Velkovski, Georgopoulos, Becvinovski, Sapazovski (Petrevski).

Blues: Gonzalez, Tramontana, P.Ferrante, Schipano, Bordignon, Di Sauro (Sterjovski), De Santis (T.Simsek), Biskic, Duzel, K.Simsek, Emmanuele.

Votes: 3- Biskic (FB), 2- Duzel (FB), 1- Velkovski (AM).

Moorabbin City, currently sitting in the relegation zone, fell 0-2 to co-tenants Bentleigh Greens at Kinston Heath Soccer Complex. The Greens opened the scoring in the 17th minute, Zoran Todorovski cut the ball back for Harry Micheil to score from close range.

Moorabbin fell further behind in the 78th minute. Substitute Alexander Moreira was brought down by Steve Marley inside the area and the Brazilian played stepped up to convert the spot kick himself.

Moorabbin did have their chance too, both Justin Scrobogna and Ciaran Feehan were denied by the woodwork.

City: McLaren, Davie, Graham, Marley, Jackson, Colosimo (Pantelidis), Leopold, Scrobogna, Durand (Blit), Feehan, Armour.

Greens: Clarke, Karapatsos (Oter), Micheil, McDonagh, Constantinou, Drakos, Hastie (Kourkoutzelos), Van Egmond (Moreira), Healey, Todorovski, Rossios.

Votes: 3- Constantinou (BG), 2- McDonagh (BG), 1- Drakos (BG).

CRAZY JOHN'S MOBILEWORLD COMMUNICATIONS

CRAZY JOHN'S STATE LEAGUE DIV 1 ROUND 17 RESULTS

Kingston City	6	Melton Reds	1
Werribee City	1	Ringwood City	1
Westgate	0	Springvale City	1
Westvale	4	Western Suburbs	1
Altona East	5	Northcote City	0
North Geelong Warriors	3	Richmond	1
Lalor United	4	Doncaster Rovers	0

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Westvale	17	15	1	1	66	11	46
Altona East	17	13	2	2	53	17	41
Western Suburbs	17	11	1	5	42	19	34
Kingston City	17	10	2	5	33	16	29
Werribee City	17	9	2	6	36	24	29
North Geelong Warriors	17	7	3	7	30	24	24
Richmond	17	7	3	7	31	30	24
Doncaster Rovers	17	7	2	8	35	33	23
Springvale City	17	6	3	8	32	36	21
Northcote City	17	6	2	9	30	47	20
Westgate	16	4	7	5	32	29	19
Lalor United	17	3	4	10	28	44	13
Ringwood City	16	3	2	11	22	41	11
Melton Reds	17	0	0	17	9	108	-3

PREMIER LEAGUE

LEADING SCORERS

21	Karl (St Albans Saints)
20	Becvinovski (Altona Magic)
17	Markovski (Preston Lions)
	Gnjidic (Bulleen Inter Kings)
15	Emmanuele (Fawkner Blues)
14	Genovesi (Green Gully Cavaliers)
13	Lazarevski (Thomastown Zebras)
11	Cuculevski (Thomastown Zebras)
	Corallo (South Dandenong)
	Donev (Green Gully Cavaliers)
	R.Mezensof (South Dandenong)

PASCOE VALE SPORTSCENE/ ABSW AWARD LEADING VOTES

23	Magnacca (Sunshine Georgies)
22	Cuculevski (Thomastown Zebras)
20	Becvinovski (Altona Magic)
	Rusmir (Altona Magic)
18	Emmanuele (Fawkner Blues)
	Karl (St Albans Saints)
17	Gnjidic (Bulleen Inter Kings)
16	Biskic (Fawkner Blues)
15	Jolevski (Thomastown Zebras)
	Emsovski (Preston Lions)
14	Fak (Altona Magic)

PREMIER LEAGUE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
St Albans Saints	24	15	5	4	45	25	50
Altona Magic	24	14	3	7	41	23	45
Bulleen Inter Kings	24	11	10	3	34	20	43
Port Melbourne Sharks	24	12	4	8	44	30	40
Green Gully Cavaliers	24	12	3	9	55	35	39
Fawkner Blues	24	10	7	7	35	27	37
Preston Lions	24	9	4	11	41	37	31
Bentleigh Greens	24	8	7	9	30	38	31
Sunshine Georgies	24	9	4	11	27	35	31
Springvale White Eagles	24	8	5	11	27	38	29
Thomastown Zebras	24	8	4	12	39	44	28
South Dandenong	24	7	4	13	38	55	25
Moorabbin City	24	6	4	14	24	48	22
Heidelberg United	24	5	4	15	29	53	19

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Victorian Soccer Federation

ROUND 18 FIXTURES
Saturday July 18

Kingston City v Ringwood City

Sunday July 19

Altona East v Lalor United
Doncaster Rovers v North Geelong Warriors
Richmond v Westvale
Western Suburbs v Westgate
Springvale City v Werribee City
Melton Reds v Northcote City

CRAZY JOHN'S STATE LEAGUE DIV 2 ROUND 17 RESULTS

Old Scotch Waverley	2	Yarraville/Glen Eira	1
Maroondah Arrows	0	Frankston Strikers	1
East Richmond	0	Melbourne City	1
Cranbourne	3	Knox City	2
Regent Bulla	2	Mooroolbark	3
Altona City	2	Essendon Bruns. Royals	3
Broadmeadows City	1	Oakleigh	6

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Oakleigh	17	13	2	2	50	13	41
Melbourne City	17	10	5	2	34	15	35
Yarraville/Glen Eira	17	11	2	4	32	16	35
Old Scotch Waverley	17	10	1	6	37	27	31
Knox City	17	7	4	6	32	23	25
East Richmond	17	6	6	5	15	13	24
Frankston Strikers	17	7	2	8	36	26	23
Cranbourne	17	7	2	8	30	35	23
Essendon Bruns. Royals	17	7	1	9	25	35	22
Altona City	17	5	6	6	20	27	21
Maroondah Arrows	17	5	5	7	20	22	20
Regent Bulla	17	6	2	9	24	38	20
Broadmeadows City	17	2	4	11	19	43	10
Mooroolbark	17	1	2	14	12	53	5

ROUND 18 FIXTURES
Saturday July 18

Regent Bulla v Broadmeadows City
Oakleigh v Altona City
Essendon Bruns. Royals v Cranbourne
Knox City v East Richmond
Melbourne City v Maroondah Arrows
Frankston Strikers v Old Scotch Waverley
Mooroolbark v Yarraville/Glen Eira

CRAZY JOHN'S STATE LEAGUE DIV 3 ROUND 17 RESULTS

Chelsea	1	Pascoe Vale	2
Bell Park	2	Frankston Pines	5
Diamond Valley United	5	South Werribee	0
South Springvale	2	Stonnington City	1
North Coburg United	0	Geelong	1
Fitzroy City	PP	Banyule City	PP
Keilor Park	4	Keysborough	2

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Geelong	17	15	1	1	52	12	46
Diamond Valley United	17	12	3	2	45	17	39
Stonnington City	17	12	2	3	38	20	38
Frankston Pines	17	10	4	3	43	24	34
South Springvale	17	8	3	6	28	23	27
Keilor Park	17	7	1	9	29	28	22
North Coburg United	17	5	4	8	21	25	19
Pascoe Vale	17	6	1	10	24	36	19
Chelsea	17	5	1	11	19	41	16
Banyule City	16	4	3	9	22	29	15
Bell Park	17	5	3	9	25	34	15
Keysborough	17	4	2	11	24	43	14
South Werribee	17	5	2	10	25	53	14
Fitzroy City	16	3	4	9	16	26	13

ROUND 18 FIXTURES
Saturday July 18

North Coburg United v Keilor Park
Keysborough v Fitzroy City
Banyule City v South Springvale
Stonnington City v Diamond Valley United
South Werribee v Bell Park
Frankston Pines v Chelsea
Geelong v Pascoe Vale

CRAZY JOHN'S STATE LEAGUE DIV 4 ROUND 17 RESULTS

Williamstown	3	Sunbury United	2
Geelong Rangers	3	South Caulfield	2
South Wantirna	4	Clifton Hill United	1
Sandringham City	3	Moreland City	3
Melton	3	Corio	6
Seaford United	3	Western Eagles	2
Langwarrin	8	Nunawading City	1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Moreland City	17	14	2	1	54	19	44
South Wantirna	17	11	3	3	44	16	36
Langwarrin	17	11	2	4	44	24	35
Williamstown	17	11	2	4	31	17	35
Seaford United	17	10	4	3	44	25	34
Sandringham City	17	8	4	5	47	32	28
Geelong Rangers	17	9	1	7	26	26	28
Corio	17	7	4	6	31	24	25
Sunbury United	17	6	4	7	23	22	22
Western Eagles	17	4	5	8	27	35	17
Melton	17	5	1	11	35	47	16
Clifton Hill United	17	4	0	13	20	58	12
Nunawading City	17	2	1	14	20	55	7
South Caulfield	17	0	1	16	11	57	1

ROUND 18 FIXTURES
Saturday July 18

Melton v Langwarrin
Nunawading City v Seaford United
Western Eagles v Sandringham City
Moreland City v South Wantirna
Clifton Hill United v Geelong Rangers
South Caulfield v Williamstown
Corio v Sunbury United

PROVISIONAL LEAGUE DIV 1 ROUND 17 RESULTS

Monbulk	3	North Sunshine Eagles	2
Brandon Park	1	Croxton Park	5
Lyndale United	1	Lalor	1
Mitcham United	1	Springvale Condors	1
Glenroy	4	Riversdale	5
Endeavour United		bye	
Templestowe Eagles		bye	

TABLE - Croxton Park 29, Lalor 26, Lyndale United 25, Endeavour United 22, North Sunshine Eagles 21, Riversdale 18, Monbulk 17, Mitcham United 17, Springvale Condors 17, Templestowe Eagles 16, Glenroy 13, Brandon Park 5.

ROUND 18 FIXTURES
Saturday July 18

Endeavour United v Glenroy
Templestowe Eagles v Mitcham United
Springvale Condors v Lyndale United
Lalor v Brandon Park
Croxton Park v Monbulk
Riversdale bye
North Sunshine Eagles bye

PROVISIONAL LEAGUE DIV 2 STH/EAST ROUND 14 RESULTS

Noble Park	1	Waverley Wanderers	4
Ashburton	3	Newborough/Yallourn	4
Braeside United	PP	Old Camberwell Gram.	PP
Morwell Pegasus	5	Doveton	2
Dingley City	2	Monash University	1
Berwick City	0	Dandenong	2

TABLE - Morwell Pegasus 34, Dandenong 34, Waverley Wanderers 31, Doveton 24, Newborough/Yallourn 22, Monash University 18, Dingley City 16, Noble Park 16, Braeside United 11, Ashburton 8, Berwick City 5, Old Camberwell Gram. 4.

NO FIXTURES SCHEDULED FOR THIS WEEKEND

PROVISIONAL LEAGUE DIV 2 NTH/WEST/CENTRAL ROUND 14 RESULTS

Broadmeadows United	0	Brunswick City	0
Ballarat	0	South Yarra	1
Sydenham Park	3	Elwood City	0
Keon Park	0	Hoppers Crossing	1
Melbourne University	1	La Trobe University	2
Meadow Park	PP	Uni. of Melbourne	PP

TABLE - Sydenham Park 33, Brunswick City 29, South Yarra 23, Broadmeadows United 22, Ballarat 20, Uni. of Melbourne 19, Elwood City 18, Hoppers Crossing 17, Melbourne University 16, Keon Park 15, La Trobe University 10, Meadow Park 8.

NO FIXTURES SCHEDULED THIS WEEKEND

PROVISIONAL LEAGUE DIV 3 STH/EAST/CENTRAL ROUND 14 RESULTS

Collingwood City	2	Caulfield United	4
North Caulfield	1	Dandenong Inter	5
Noble Park United	2	Endeavour Hills	2
Ivanhoe United	5	Parkmore	1
Flemington Falcons	0	Heatherton United	4
Thornbury United	1	Clayton	2

TABLE - Dandenong Inter 32, Clayton 30, Heatherton United 30, Noble park United 28, Caulfield United 23, Ivanhoe United 17, Endeavour Hills 17, North Caulfield 16, Flemington Falcons 15, Collingwood City 12, Thornbury United 10, Parkmore 3.

NO FIXTURES SCHEDULED THIS WEEKEND

PROVISIONAL LEAGUE DIV 3 NTH/WEST ROUND 14 RESULTS

Mill Park	0	Watsonia Heights	0
Whittlesea United	PP	North Glenroy	PP
West Preston	1	North Reservoir	1
Brimbank	4	Northern United	3
Keilor United	4	Somerton City	2
Darebin United		bye	

TABLE - Mill Park 26, Somerton City 23, Darebin United 22, North Reservoir 19, Northern United 19, North Glenroy 17, Keilor United 13, West Preston 13, Brimbank 12, Watsonia Heights 11, Whittlesea United 5.

NO FIXTURES SCHEDULED THIS WEEKEND

PROVISIONAL LEAGUE CUP - ROUND 2 OUTSTANDING GAME
Saturday July 18

North Sunshine Eagles v Uni. of Melbourne

TACKLE DIABETES HEALTHY DIET TRY IT

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PREMIER LEAGUE RESULTS

Round 24

Green Gully Cavaliers 3 (Didulica, Neceski, Genovesi) – **Thomastown Zebras 2** (Jolevski, Lingurovski)

Round 25

Altona Magic 1 (Becvinovski) – **Fawkner Blues 1** (Emmanuele)
Heidelberg United 1 (Lenetis) – **Green Gully Cavaliers 6** (Genovesi 2, Dimitrelos, Spiteri, Donev, Papadopoulos)
Thomastown Zebras 0 – St Albans Saints 0
Port Melbourne Sharks 1 (Palamaras) – **Preston Lions 2** (Emsovski 2)
Moorabbin City 0 – Bentleigh Greens 2 (Micheil, Moreira)
Bulleen Inter Kings 1 (Gnjidic) – **Sunshine Georgies 0**
Springvale White Eagles 1 (M.Marinkovic) – **South Dandenong 1** (R.Mezensof)

PREMIER LEAGUE FIXTURES

Round 25
Saturday July 18

South Dandenong v Bulleen Inter Kings – Ross Reserve – kick off 3.00pm
Bentleigh Greens v Port Melbourne Sharks – Kingston Heath Soccer Complex – kick of 3.00pm

Sunday July 19

Sunshine Georgies v Altona Magic – Chaplin Reserve – kick off 3.00pm
Fawkner Blues v Moorabbin City – CB Smith Reserve – kick off 3.00pm
Preston Lions v Thomastown Zebras – Goodyear Stadium – kick off 3.00pm
St Albans Saints v Heidelberg United – Churchill Reserve – kick off 3.00pm

Monday July 20

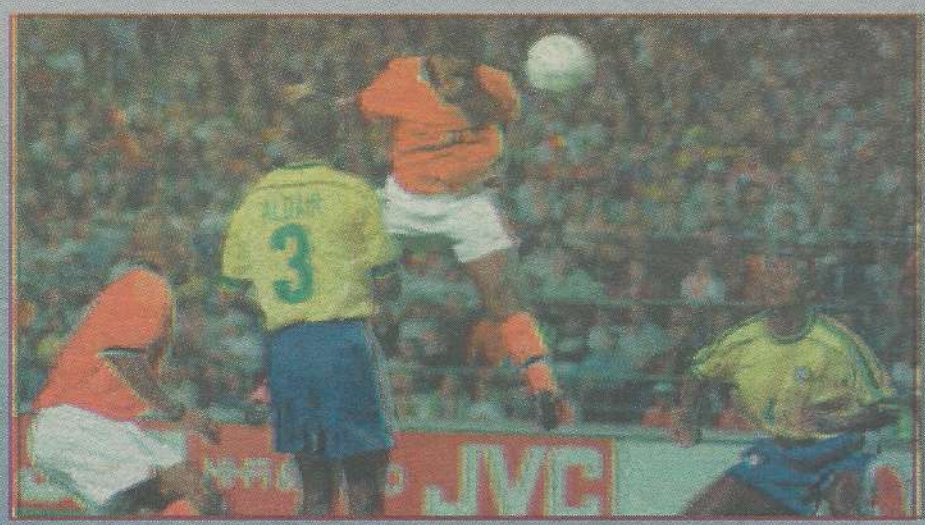
Green Gully Cavaliers v Springvale White Eagles – Green Gully Reserve – kick off 8.15pm

CROATIA 2 H

Theatre of Dreams: A nation for less than a decade and Third Place at the first attempt. For

TO DREAM THE IM

So nee



BRAZIL 1 (4) HOLLAND 1 (2)

LLAND 1

omance, Passion and Spirit, Croatia's Odyssey at France 1998 will long be remembered.

POSSIBLE DREAM

ar, yet so far...!

FRANCE 2 CROATIA 1

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SHOOTOUT NOT SO BAD

It never ceases to amaze me after all these years of penalty shootouts how everybody continues to say it's an unfair way of deciding a drawn game.

All sorts of different wacky ideas and solutions have been bandied about, including taking a man off each side every five minutes in extra time until there is only the goalkeeper's left if need be.

That to me is just as bad as a penalty shootout — as a coach cannot devise any proper strategy or tactics as the game changes every time you take players off.

In other words it becomes pot luck or a lottery again. So what is the answer you may ask?

As it's not possible to continue playing extra time until someone scores the golden goal, or replay the games, due to tight schedules plus TV commitments, the only other way to virtually eliminate penalty shootouts is to eliminate the course or need for them.

The reason for penalty shootouts is because the game ends in a draw. The reason why one in three games end in a draw is because the goal averages are too low.

The reason why the goal average is too low is because only 10% of shots on goal are converted into goals. That's right 90% of goal scoring chances either miss by a small margin of less than half a metre (on all sides) hit the goal-posts or saved by the goalkeeper.

They are the statistics that come out of "France 90". While Les Murray may think that 2.7% goal average in France is a healthy average, it is not. It's just a continuation of the abysmal scoring average of the past 36 years, since professionalism and huge money started entering the game, thanks to the advent of television, which today virtually runs sports.

Hence the 'not to lose' attitude of many countries in Europe.

Also if you took out the extra eight countries in the World Cup like Jamaica, South Korea, Saudia Arabia who copped a few hidings, you would have had an even lower goal average than 2.7%.

So what is the answer you may ask? Well there are two or three things that can be done without being radical or altering the very fabric of the game, as the Americans would like to do.

Their idea of getting rid of offside, or the goalkeeper or both, is ludricious.

However my proposal to get goal scoring averages back up to nearly five a game as it was back in he fifties, is to raise the conversion rate to at least 25% or even 33% of all goal scoring shots.

To do that you need to do a few things which are only minor changes, not radical major changes.

Firstly you need to enlarge the goal mouth by a marginal size of 25 to 30 centimetres in height (10 to 12 inches) and 50 to 60 centimetres in width (20 to 25 inches).

Most goalkeeper's today are taller and have sharper reflexes than there counterparts of 40 to 50 years ago. Which means that they have a reach which is about a metre above the goalpost, when they jump with an outstretched hand at present.

I am told FIFA had originally planned for larger goal mouths, but somehow they never went through with it. It's a pity because we would have seen twice as many goals scored, if it up an running in this World Cup.

Dominic Scullino,
Nerang
Qld

Vietnam: Emerging Soccer Nation

I have recently returned from Vietnam and while staying at the coastal city of Nha Trang was invited to two games at the local stadium. The popularity of football throughout Vietnam is huge.

On every beach and spare piece of ground you will see boys kicking a ball around — some wearing replica shirts of their favourite European team.

There is excellent coverage of football throughout the world in the only English written paper, the Vietnam News. (AFL results were also published but alas no results from Brisbane Strikers games!) Coverage of the game, worldwide, on TV is also comprehensive and eagerly watched.

The two games I witnessed were quite fascinating, and give an insight into where the game is going in this country that is emerging from the ravages of war and the re-building process.

The national competition is not unlike our Ericsson Cup with 14 teams drawn from the length and breadth of the country. Teams from the army and police force are particularly strong.

Nha Trang stadium has a capacity of 20,000 with concrete seating and absolutely no cover which is quite daunting with temperatures around 35 degrees when the games kicked off.

There was not one single toilet which is not unusual throughout Asia! The crowds at the games I saw were in the vicinity of 7-10,000 quite significant when entry can cost a day's wages.

I paid 15,000 dong ($1.75 approx) for one of the better seats.

Game one was a fairly tense affair as the local team Khanh Province were playing front runners Saigon Police and appeared content to play for a draw.

What was impressive was that while played in an extremely competitive manner only two yellow cards were issued throughout the game and my pet hate (shirt holding and arm grabbing) was non existent.

One of the Saigon Police strikers, currently in the national team, was outstanding. Well built and lethal with both feet and in the air he would without doubt be a great asset for an Australian side.

The game ended in a draw and the locals went home happy despite the lack of goals. The refereeing was unobtrusive and firm. Most players accepted decisions with a polite nod of the head.

The second game was a ripper with the local side, after leading, going down 4-2 to a very speedy side from a northern province. Again the game was played in a very competitive fashion, three yellow cards, and the first free kick came after 20 minutes.

Some positives for me, and hopefully we can learn from, was the treatment of injured players. Anyone going down was quickly assessed and put on a stretcher within seconds. All returned to the field of play nearly as quickly. Wayward shots at goals were not retrieved by the keeper — he had a replacement ball placed on the spot and absolutely no playing times was lost.

The spirit in which the games were played was most impressive, the refereeing spot on, and the behaviour of the crowds enthusiastic but fair.

With 70% of Vietnam's population under the age of 30 they will become a force on the world scene. Their enthusiasm for the game is amazing and history will show that countries who suffer extreme poverty have individuals with a huge motivation to improve their life, and football is one method of accomplishing this dream.

Whether the Vietnamese government is willing to share its players is another matter, but I saw enough to tell me that we should be looking at an exchange of players and ideas.

They have recently appointed a European to the national coaching position and are increasing their visitations with neighbouring countries.

On the negative side there have been allegations of match fixing and several players and coaches have been suspended. This blight on the game is common practice, it appears, throughout Asia but a very firm stand is being taken by the authorities.

Mike Parker
Auchenflower
Qld

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ABSW AND FRANCE 98

ALL THE ACTION AND EXCITMENT OF THE FINAL GAMES PLUS ANALYSIS AND COMMENT FROM AUSTRALIA

Au Revoir France ...

VIEW FROM FRANCE

Compiled by ABSW

FORGET BECKHAM IT'S SILLY BILIC!

The backlash in the Euro media, including in Croatia, is on in earnest. Slaven Bilic could be made an outcast by his fellow countrymen after robbing French star Laurent Blanc of a place in the World Cup Final.

In Britain the Croatian was condemned by his own union, the Professional Footballers' Association, and his former manager at West Ham, Harry Redknapp, for overreacting to a foul and getting Blanc sent off in Wednesday's semi-final.

Now Croatia's biggest-selling newspaper Vecernji Last also turned on the Everton defender and called for him to be axed for the third place play-off against Holland in Paris as punishment.

PFA boss Gordon Taylor said in the light of this incident that FIFA should urgently consider the use of video evidence in disciplinary matters as play-acting to get players punished had now reached "epidemic proportions."

Taylor also said that: "This is the most important tournament in world football and there are a lot of impressionable youngsters watching. We should be highlighting the positive aspects of the game as opposed to things like play-acting.

"I think there comes a time when we have to say enough is enough and maybe Bilic's performance will persuade the authorities to deal with this curse on the game."

TV replays clearly showed that Blanc, who had never been sent off at club level or in his 73 previous internationals, barely touched 29-year-old Bilic, yet the powerful 6ft 2in, 13-stone enforcer of the Croat defence collapsed as if hit by a Mike Tyson special.

It earned Marseille defender Blanc a red card and, as he turns 33 in November, surely cost him his last chance to reach a World Cup Final.

Brave Laurent Blanc heads away from Suker.

Frane Soic, sports writer at Vecernji Last in Zagreb, said: "It is true that Bilic made a theatrical dive although he has not been the only one guilty of this during the World Cup.

"There is a feeling of sympathy for Blanc and a feeling, too, that Bilic should not play in the play-off match.

"It is a meaningless game anyway, but it will mean something if it shows the world that football does not accept diving. We will be happy if the manager does not pick Bilic and puts him on the bench. Croatia had a great run in the tournament, but they have gone from heroes in France to villains in the eyes of many for depriving Blanc of his place."

In one the understatements of the Cup, Split-born Bilic, admitted the challenge was "not nasty".

Bilic's former boss at West Ham, Redknapp, said Blanc's sending-off was tragic. "To reach a World Cup Final and be deprived of that by someone conning the ref is the lowest of the low. It has no place in the game."

"No justice, solidarity with Laurent Blanc," proclaimed a protest sign being prepared by the village mayor in the southern French village of Rousson when favourite son Laurent Blanc was banned from the final after being sent off.

GENDARME BENEFIT SEPTEMBER

We noted last week about the benefit game for a French gendarme who was the victim of German thugs. It has been postponed and will probably be played in mid-September.

The French and German soccer federations said last week the elimination of the German team and the subsequent departure of its supporters was behind the postponement.

"We had to take into account that the game, without German fans, would not have had the right atmosphere," Egidius Braun, head of the German federation, said.

Daniel Nivel has been in a coma with irreparable brain damage since June 21 when he was assaulted by hooligans in Lens after Germany's 2-2 draw with Yugoslavia.

The benefit game, involving former greats like Franz Beckenbauer and Jean Tigana, was due to have taken place on the eve of the World Cup Final.

It will now probably take place in mid-September at a stadium near the French border with Germany.

"By moving it to a venue near the border we are giving all German fans the opportunity of showing their solidarity with Daniel Nivel and at the same time distancing themselves from any form of violence," Braun said.

Michel Platini, head of the Cup organizing committee, had said he would not take part in the benefit match because he thought the timing and location of the game was inappropriate.

The two federations still intend to create a special fund for the gendarme and his family.

Let's hope this is the last time we hear of such a despicable act by these so-called supporters.

They Said It ...

"I have to admit, I didn't really watch soccer much before this. Actually, hardly at all. But this is different. It's in France, and the World Cup. It's just another spirit."
Danielle Trepant, a 46-year-old housewife from northern France.

"It's a complete euphoria taking over France. Each time France wins it's like a shot from a cannon. And I don't even like soccer that much."
Geraldine Lessieux, 20, a French supporter.

"I don't know how long this feeling will last, but let's enjoy it now."
Philippe Vallot, 36, a computer executive, another French supporter.

"We appreciate the beauty of a good game. It's not true that we don't love soccer like the others."
Vincent Rey, a wineseller from Clermont-Ferrand in the south of France.

"The French people have been really great, I think. Everybody's nice to me, hotel keepers, people in the street, everybody."
James Balen, 20, a student from London, in France for the Finals.

TRAGEDY BEHIND SUCCESS

Success will never bring back loved ones, but in Emmanuel Petit's case, it at least provides some comfort.

When Olivier Petit was only 18 he collapsed and died during a football match and his brother, the French star, commemorates that painful fact during the national anthem before each French match.

He throws a handful of grass over his shoulder, "to make sure that Olivier never goes out of my thoughts", but the whole solemn process is somehow becoming more of a spiritual rather than mournful task for Petit.

"I know that my brother is looking down and watching me play because I can feel him doing that," said the Arsenal midfielder.

"His presence is there for me and it makes me think that, perhaps, this is destiny paying our family back for the tragedy it has endured.

"Now, in the space of 18 months, I have won the French title with Monaco, the Double with Arsenal and now I am in the World Cup Final with France."

Success could not come to a more deserving family, who will never see Olivier again, but his spirit lives on in the footballing success of his brother.

VIEW FROM FRANCE

Compiled by ABSW

FIFA INC.'S GLOBAL VISION

If FIFA and its marketing partner ISL are right, FIFA's double-globe football symbol will soon become one of the best known commercial logos in the world.

"Right now it is an under-used trademark," Glen Kirton, ISL's head of football, said before the World Cup Final.

"If you look at the France'98 symbol there is no identification with FIFA on it, but there should be.

"ISL are working with FIFA to develop the whole look itself, to market an awareness of the FIFA brand around the world and to make FIFA much more closely identified with all its marketing rather than just with certain events as it now is.

"It will be a long-term project, but it should be a highly profitable one."

While FIFA's symbol is unlikley to become as readily identifiable as the five-ringed Olympic symbol, the move is sure to increase the public's awareness of FIFA very quicky.

And it is part of a new initiative in the long-term relationship between ISL and FIFA reflecting a change in the concept of marketing the world's number one sport and its worldwide governing body.

ISL — International Sport and Leisure — became FIFA's marketing partner in 1982 when ISL's main function was to generate extra income.

Sixteen years on, ISL and FIFA are now involved in maximizing the potential of the huge oportunities available.

An agreement signed at the end of last year sees ISL continuing as FIFA's marketing arm at least until the end of the 2006 World Cup finals.

FIFA have sold the worldwide television rights for the 2002 and 2006 World Cups to the German sports marketing and media group Kirch for 2.8 billion Swiss francs ($1.8 billion), and ISL and FIFA will work closely on maximising the marketing potential for those two tournaments.

ISL do not plan to increase the number of official FIFA partners from the 12 currently involved at present but for the 2002 tournament due to be staged in South Korea and Japan there will be a reduction in the number of local companies officially involved with the World Cup.

"Forty-five companies have been involved here, but in 2002 the number will be between 24 and 30 depending on whether we need different suppliers in the two countries," Kirton explained.

ISL have also become involved in FIFA's on-line services and in the developing technological area of virtual publicity and marketing, but Keith Cooper, FIFA's director of communications stressed FIFA is very much the senior partner.

"ISL does not control FIFA, FIFA controls its own marketing activities," he said.

Earlier this week new FIFA president Sepp Blatter said that FIFA, which only employs 65 people, must expand if it is to maximize the enormous potential for growth forecast in the first decade of the new millenium.

NO DOPES IN SOCCER

NRL take note: All 240 dope tests in the first 60 matches of the World Cup have been negative, FIFA said last week. Dr Michel D'Hooge, the Belgian chairman of FIFA's sports medical committee said, "It gives me great satisfaction, but we are not claiming a total 100 percent victory yet as there are still four matches to play.

"However, the majority of players who are still to play have already been tested and we are hopeful that by the end of the tournament there will be perfect compliance of the FIFA regulations."

Under FIFA rules two players from each team are tested after every match following a random draw made at halftime.

Only three players have ever been sanctioned by FIFA for contravening doping controls at the World Cup.

Meanwhile in other news, England midfielder Paul Ince told British Sunday newspapers he had played in the World Cup despite having a broken ankle bone.

Ince, who played with his left ankle heavily strapped, missed a penalty in the shoot-out with Argentina which put England out of the World Cup in the second round.

Ince said he hurt the ankle in a tackle during an English league match in May but did not realise until he had an ultrasound scan after England's World Cup defeat by Romania in their second group match that a piece had broken off the bone.

"I saw the scan and it showed a gap where a piece of bone had broken away," said Ince, who limped out of the 2-1 defeat by Romania but returned to face Colombia.

The Liverpool midfielder said he and England manager Glenn Hoddle had decided to keep the injury a secret.

"I was in agony at times," Ince told the newspapers. "It needed weeks of rest but I wasn't prepared to sit out the World Cup."

Finally, the celebrated "Three Tenors" kicked off festivities for the 1998 World Cup final with a concert at the foot of France's Eiffel Tower on Friday, but the expected crowds failed to materialise.

For Jose Carreras, Placido Domingo and Luciano Pavarotti it was a hat-trick of World Cup performances, following hugely successful concerts in Rome in 1990 and Los Angeles in1994.

But the balmy summer nights in Italy and the United States were a distant memory on a chilly, windswept Parisian evening, with both big-name stars and the general public staying away.

Organisers had billed the French spectacular as the biggest concert of all time with the two-hour, 45 minute show broadcast live to more than 75 countries before an estimated global television audience of some two billion people.

In addition, around 800,000 people were expected to turn up in the massive Champs de Mars park to see the famed trio in the flesh. In the end, police estimated only some 80,000 made it.

Even the VIP stand, where top tickets cost up to 6,500 francs ($1,600) apiece, was dotted with empty seats and many people slunk away before the end to escape the cold.

"If it had been a beautiful day there would have been a lot more people," said one official from the Interior Ministry.

But if the poor turnout disappointed the tenors, they did not show it as they returned to the red-carpeted stage for a series of encores before an emptying auditorium.

Accompanied by the Orchestra of Paris, the trio sang their now-standard mix of arias and popular tunes against the dramatic backdrop of the illuminated Tower.

Besides the World Cup performances, the three have appeared in numerous other concerts in 10 different countries. This was their first concert in France.

ALL-STAR TEAM

Ronaldo's brilliance and Marcel Desailly's tough defenCe earned them spots on the FIFA World Cup All-Star Team, which includes six other players from the World Cup Final. The 16-man team also has three players from the Netherlands, two each from Paraguay and Denmark and one from Croatia.

Brazil's Ronaldo and France's Desailly, who plays for AC Milan, have often faced each other in highly respected Serie A in Italy.

"We recognized players we think brought dimension to the competition or added value to their teams' performances," said Gerard Houllier of FIFA's Technical Study Group, which announced its team Friday. "We are aware many other players could have been in this group."

Joining Ronaldo from Brazil were defender Roberto Carlos and midfielders Rivaldo and Dunga. The other French players were goalkeeper Fabien Barthez, defender Lilian Thuram and

midfielder Zinedine Zidane, who was selected despite missing two games with a suspension.

The Dutch selections were striker Dennis Bergkamp, midfielder Edgar Davids and defender Frank de Boer.

Paraguay goalkeeper Jose Luis Chilavert and defender Carlos Gamarra also were chosen, along with Danish brothers Michael Laudrup, a midfielder, and Brian Laudrup, a striker, and Croatia's top scorer Davor Suker.

Pele, a spokesman for All-Star team sponsor MasterCard, said "Ronaldo started with physical problems, but his performance has grown and he has showed that in the last two games," Pele said. "Desailly has been the best defender in theWorld Cup."

Pele mentioned the leadership of such players as Dunga, the Brazilian captain, and de Boer, the Dutch captain, as being a factor in choosing an all-star squad.

"You need players who organize," he said. "Dunga is like a player who brings up the confidence in a team. He will shout at players, fight with them to push them to do their best.

"This is important to a team. You must have someone who takes those opportunities.

Six players were chosen as reserves and Houllier said FIFA had its eyes on the future when it made those selections: goalkeeper Edwin van der Sar of the Netherlands; midfielders Jay Okocha of Nigeria and Juan Veron of Argentina; and strikers Christian Vieri of Italy, Michael Owen of England and Thierry Henry of France.

MasterCard will donate $50,000 in the names of the players to SOS Children's Village, FIFA's official charity.

Brazil's Rivaldo (above) named in the All-Star side while Jay Jay Okacha (below) was selected in the reserve squad.

FIFA ALL-STAR TEAM ...

Goalkeepers: Fabien Barthez (France), Jose Luis Chilavert (Paraguay)

Defenders: Marcel Desailly (France), Roberto Carlos (Brazil), Frank de Boer (Netherlands), Lilian Thuram (France), Carlos Gamarra (Paraguay)

Midfielders: Edgar Davids (Netherlands), Dunga, Rivaldo (both Brazil), Zinedine Zidane (France), Michael Laudrup (Denmark)

Strikers: Dennis Bergkamp (Netherlands), Ronaldo (Brazil), Brian Laudrup (Denmark), Davor Suker (Croatia)

Reserves: Edwin van der Sar (Netherlands), Thierry Henry (France), Jay Jay Okocha (Nigeria), Michael Owen (England), Juan Veron (Argentina), Christian Vieri (Italy)

FRANCE 98

HOLLAND V BRAZIL

Compiled by ABSW

OH SO CLOSE FOR HIDDINK'S HOLLAND

BRAZILIANS KEEP THEIR COOL AND SAMBA INTO FINAL

Brazil showed steel in addition to silky skills in overcoming a very good Dutch side in the first of the semi-finals. Although the predictions of the game of the decade proved somewhat off the mark, it was still an absorbing and engaging encounter between sides worthy of a finals berth.

Brazil hit all four shots, and Taffarel stopped consecutive attempts by Phillip Cocu and Ronald de Boer in the penalty shootout.

That set off wild celebrations among the yellow-clad players on the field and their legion of followers in the stands in Marseille.

"I felt we deserved a moment of joy," said Taffarel, who helped Brazil to its 1994 crown in the United States. "Brazil now can be very proud of the team. We have a great force behind us for the final. We are very ready."

It was a sizzling conclusion to a classic game between perhaps the two strongest teams in the tournament.

Brazil erased any doubts that this squad is worthy of its status as the top-ranked team in the world. There were questions when the Brazilians were a little lacklustre in earlier rounds, springing some leaks in their defence and not dominating midfield.

But their victory over a superb Dutch team was convincing evidence that Saint-Denis will see arguably the best side in the world.

It was a crushing defeat for the Dutch, who had a little more vigour in the closing stages of the normal time, tying the score with three minutes left with a header by Patrick Kluivert — the third straight match in which the Orange shirts netted at the death.

They couldn't find the net often enough in the shootout, though.

"We could have won. Now, the dream is over," lamented a dejected Ronald de Boer after the game.

Ronaldo, the two-time world player of the year, was held in check throughout the scoreless first half, but broke free down the middle just 21 seconds after half-time. He took a perfect cross from Rivaldo on left wing, and after a deft touch of the left foot, sent the ball through the legs of goalkeeper Edwin van der Saar. Clearly the Dutch were still mentally on a break.

That began a fiesta of song from the legions of Brazilians in the stands, and a huge smile of relief from Ronaldo.

But Dutch magic struck again as Kluivert took a perfect pass from Ronald de Boer and headed it powerfully down and off Taffarel's hands into the net.

That set up Golden Goal extra time.

Both goalkeepers made diving saves early in the extra period, and Kluivert missed by inches after a superb pass from Frank de Boer.

Ronaldo made a spectacular 60-yard run, but the ever-present de Boer slid to knock the ball away.

Brazil showed its class when it really mattered, Ronaldo, Rivaldo, Emerson and captain Dunga did the damage in the shootout after words of confidence were instilled into them by coach Zagallo (see story next page.)

But after Frank de Boer, the best player on the field through 120 minutes, and Dennis Bergkamp beat Taffarel, the goalkeeper shut the door.

However, Ronaldo could not shed his shadow, Frank de Boer, in the first half. Nearly every time Ronaldo touched the ball, de Boer picked it clean.

But he did have one excellent chance in the penalty area, only to see Jaap Stam make a sliding block. Bebeto later just missed on a header.

Ronaldo did not miss to open the second half, however, taking advantage of the Netherlands' shortage on defence. With Arthur Numan suspended and Winston Bogarde injured, midfielder Cocu was forced to play left back.

Ronaldo also missed on a breakaway in the 74th minute, just moments after going down when kicked on the ankle. He was still limping as he headed in on van der Saar, and Edgar Davids caught up, pushing the ball just wide before Ronaldo could get off a decent shot.

Rivaldo almost scored from the seat of his pants, shoveling a shot off a brilliant feed by Denilson, yet van der Saar kicked it away.

Brazil kept pressing for the clincher and nearly got caught when the Dutch went on a 3-on-2 counterattack. But Kluivert, continuing to misfire, shot way too high.

In the end some would say that the Dutch were a little unfortunate, particularly as replays later clearly showed Brazilian keeper Taffarel moving forward off his line when he stopped de Boer's fatal attempt.

Keepers are allowed to move along the line but not in front. The ref surely must have noticed, however, when push came to shove, Brazil showed they are mentally tough. And that's what counts in such situations.

IN MARSEILLE: SEMI-FINAL

BRAZIL	1
HOLLAND	1

AET: BRAZIL WON 4-2 ON PENALTIES

Ronaldo in spectacular fashion while Taffarel (below) shows he's no slouch in the shot-stopping department.

Kluivert power ... three minutes to go and his perfect power header sets up extra time.

WHAT THEY SAID...

Compiled by ABSW

ZAGALLO'S WORDS OF WISDOM GUIDE HOLDERS TO FINAL

WE ARE THE BEST!

Brazil coach Mario Zagallo, emotionally overcome after Tuesday's World Cup semi-final victory over the Netherlands, revealed his words of encouragement were behind their penalty shoot-out success.

The Old Wolf, who wept on the pitch after Taffarel saved the fourth Dutch penalty to send the world champions into their sixth final, said his words of wisdom made the difference.

Ronaldo, Rivaldo, substitute Emerson and captain Dunga all strode forward and confidently stroked their penalties into the net to give Brazil a 4-2 win in the shoot-out. Given the gravity of the moment, this was a great effort by the Brazilians.

"I went to each player who was going to take a penalty, one by one," Zagallo said. "I said 'we are going to win this championship, we are going to win this match'.

"Penalties are a lottery but passing on confidence like this is fundamental. Knowing how to pick the players was also crucial," he said, referring to his surprise decision to pick Emerson.

The Bayer Leverkusen player has only five international caps and has made only two appearances as a substitute in the cup. He did not let him down.

"A lot of people must have been surprised by Emerson, but from what I saw in training I knew he was a penalty taker and he took his penalty just as he did in training. It was an important choice for us."

Zagallo appeared ecstatic with his side's performance from an overall perspective.

"There must a tremendous carnival going on back home now," he added later.

"We who are here want to win, represent the country, this green and yellow. Our win showed the dedication of each one.

"It was a magnificent win which did Brazil proud."

They certainly did. Nevertheless, they will be judged on what happens in the Final in Saint Denis, but they showed in Marseille that they have the coaching and playing temperament for the big occasion.

The Crown of World Football awaits.

WE SHOULD HAVE WON SAY DUTCH

Phillip Cocu lamented later: "It's a pity we didn't have the luck we had in our other games as we really could have beaten this Brazilian side. I believe they were afraid of us," said the Dutch defender, the first Dutchman to miss from the spot. Captain Frank de Boer echoed Cocu's sentiments. "We had chances to finish Brazil. They seem to just rely on one man, Ronaldo. That's not our style of play and we dominated the game," he said.

The Dutch had plenty of chances in the first half and were continually pressing for the last 10 minutes of normal time. Patrick Kluivert scored their equaliser in the 87th minute, but only after missing a clearer chance seven minutes before.

The Dutch also believe they had a valid penalty award dismissed two minutes from the end of extra time when Pierre van Hooijdonk went down after some shirt-tugging.

"Now I don't feel like playing the third/fourth playoff, but that will come in time, I guess," said Ronald de Boer.

De Boer missed the Netherlands' fourth penalty, ending their World Cup challenge.

"I should have waited just a moment longer and seen that the keeper was going one way," he said.

The Netherlands have perhaps proved that, like Italy and England, they are not natural winners from penalty shoot-outs. They went out in the same way against France in Euro '96.

"We'll be having a bad night. That's for sure," said Ronald de Boer.

Dutch coach Guus Hiddink said his side had made an excellent impression and it had been a very close game.

"It's a crying shame that then you have to lose like this. Now we'll have to retire for a bit to lick our wounds, then we'll gear up for the battle for the third place."

See match report for third/fouth place on page 26.

FRANCE 98

FRANCE v CROATIA

Compiled by ABSW

THURAM HEADS THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

BLANC'S RED CARD SOURS VICTORY OVER CLASSY CROATIA

Jules Rimet would have been proud. He gave us the idea of a World Cup 70 years ago, and now France themselves have reached the final for the first time, overcoming world soccer's emerging nation, Croatia.

A pair of second-half goals by defender Lilian Thuram gave the French a 2-1 semi-final victory before a carnival crowd at the national stadium just north of Paris.

"It is truly the most beautiful day in the history of French sport," French President Jacques Chirac said.

Reaching the final against Brazil didn't come easy.

Following a scoreless first half, France found itself behind just 26 seconds after intermission, and — after quickly rallying for the lead - had to play the last 17 minutes a man short when defender Laurent Blanc was ejected for shoving an opponent in the face.

The victory was not assured until goalie Fabien Barthez tipped a last-gasp shot over the crossbar less than 30 seconds before the final whistle.

"I don't think we had a wonderful game tonight, but we played our hearts out and that made a difference," French coach Aime Jacquet said. "Croatia played a very strong game and it was hard to move their defence around."

Croatia is a country just eigtht years old and in its first World Cup. No other rookie had gone so far since Italy won the soccer championship in 1934.

That was the second of the 16 editions of what has become the biggest single sports event on Earth, the brainchild of French sports officials in the Roaring '20s. Never before in nine tries had France made it past the semi-finals.

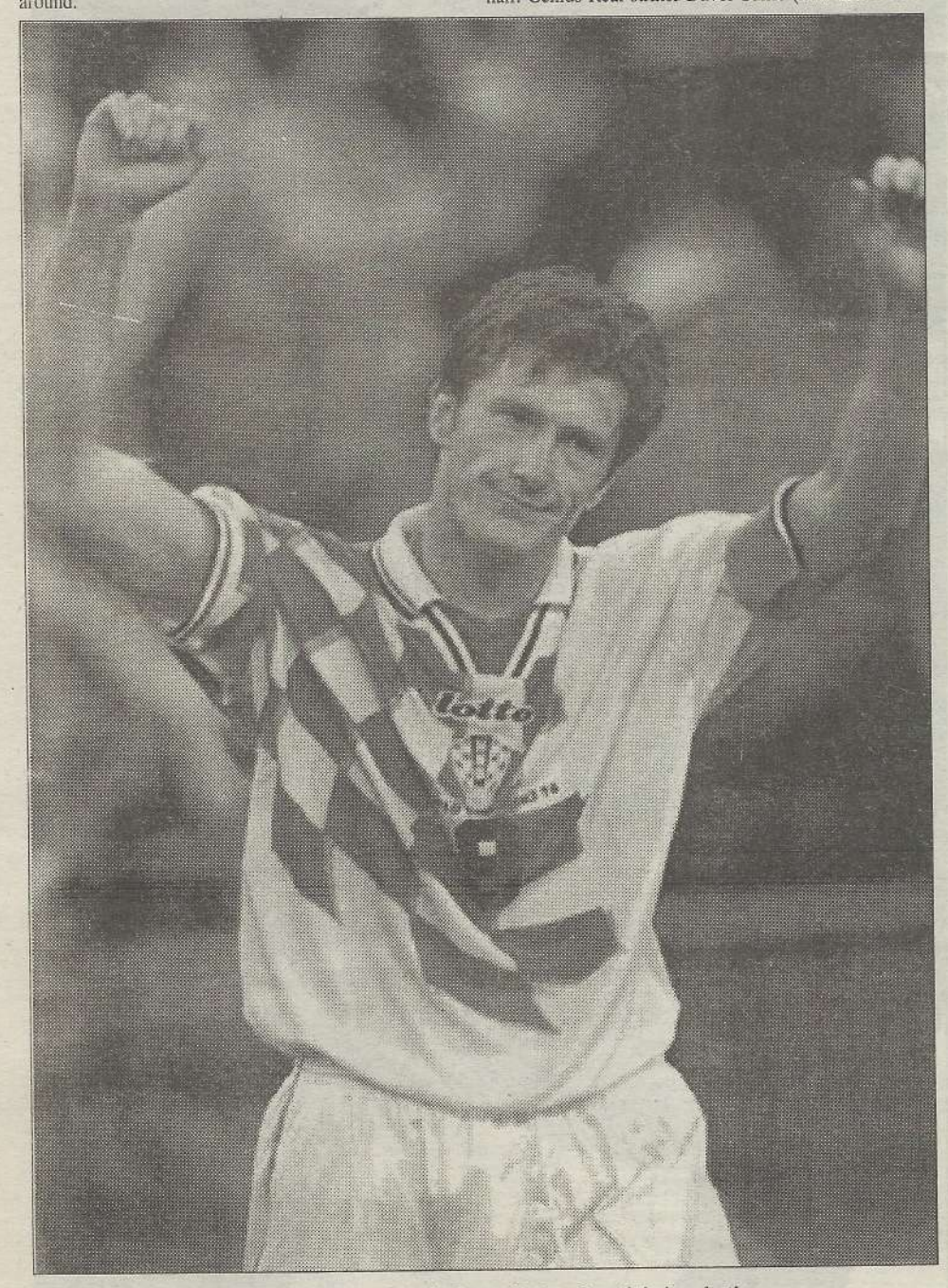
It will be the first time the defending champion and the host nation meet for the championship.

Jacquet, who has been criticized for a lacklustre attack despite the team's success, said the championship "will be a wonderful game, a festival of football. Brazil is the defending champion and the best team in the world."

France has been the tournament's chameleon, scoring goals in the first few games, then hiding among the rocks. It had just one goal, a sudden-death winner by Blanc against Paraguay, in the second round and quarter-finals, and needed a shootout to beat Italy.

This one was a shootout, too, but it never made it to overtime or the penalty kick.

Croatia's goal shook France, coming, like the other semi-final, literally seconds after the ref blew for second half. Genius Real striker Davor Suker (how much must he be worth now??) broke free of the French shackles to beat Barthes after only 26 seconds.



We did our best ... Deadly Davor Suker, Croatia's inspiration.

IN SAINT-DENIS: SEMI-FINAL

FRANCE	2
CROATIA	1

France's hero ... Lilian Thuram. His price tag has just increased tenfold.

Stunned from their shell, the French attacked, and - in keeping with their defensive strength — they evened the score a minute later.

Thuram, playing on the right, stripped the ball from Croatian star Zvonimir Boban just into the penalty area. He nudged the ball to striker Youri Djorkaeff, then twirled and took the ball on a great give-and-go and tied it from 18 yards.

"What was fatal was to concede a goal within the same minute," Croatian coach Miroslav Blazevic said. "They drew all their strength from that."

Thuram scored the winner in the 70th minute, this time with the help of playmaker Zinedine Zidane.

The star midfielder nicknamed "Zizou" sent a cross to Thuram's right foot. The 26-year-old defender then spun his man around, with what looked like the help of a grabbed jersey, and sent in the winner from 18 yards.

He was stunned. His teammates and fans were overjoyed. And France was on its way to a World Cup title game at last.

They will go without Blanc, who automatically gets at least a one-game suspension for his foul on Slaven Bilic in the 74th minute.

"Of course we will miss Laurent Blanc," Jacquet said. "His sending off was very unfortunate."

This was a game all of France wanted to attend, and 77,000 got inside, along with about 300 Croatian fans in red and white, packed into a corner that looked like a bloodshot checkered flag.

Even the moon, rising from the Seine, peeked in on the game through a slit in the south end late in the first half. And just like the tides, its passing brought a shift in direction.

France dominated the early going, from the fourth minute when Zidane unleashed a shot from just above the penalty arc off a nifty back pass from Djorkaeff. It zoomed wide.

The nightwatchman's son from Marseille was back five minutes later with a shot from 30 yards that sailed over the bar, and it was Zidane again at the 10-minute mark, this time with a header off a cross from Emanuel Petit. It, too, was high.

Captain Didier Deschamps and Djorkaeff got in shots at Drazen Ladic, the Croatian goalie stopping them all. It was a familiar pattern. Although they were controlling the game, the French gunners could not finish off the play. And as the lunar visitor rose about 35 minutes into the game, Jacquet made a move to put that killer touch into the lineup.

He took out Christian Karembeu, who started in order to add midfield defence, and inserted Thierry Henry, the team's leading scorer with four goals. And Croatia seemed to notice, because its strikeforce suddenly came live.

After hardly crossing midfield, Croatia filled the final 10 minutes of the half with scoring chances, the best a left-foot shot from 10 yards by Aljosa Asanovic in the 36th minute that was just wide. There also was a 15-yard volley over the bar by defender Bilic four minutes later.

That momentum carried into the second half with Suker's quick strike before the French defenders did the job once more.

By the time you read this, France's ultimate destiny will be known, but, for this moment, the French nation were galvanised as one behind their proud and strong national team, just like Croatia is with their side, who have shown they are one team to watch for Euro 2000.

WHAT THEY SAID ...

Compiled by ABSW

FRENCH HAVE MIND POWER TO BOOT!

WE WERE MENTALLY STRONG, SAYS JACQUET

France coach Aime Jacquet hailed his side's 2-1 defeat of Croatia in the World Cup semi-final and praised two-goal scorer Lilian Thuram.

"It was a beautiful victory, we played a great game tonight. We pulled round the match thanks to our team efforts and mental concentration."

Of the sending-off of Laurent Blanc in the 74th minute, Jacquet said: "I don't know what happened but it will be difficult for us (in the final). Brazil are the best team in the world. I am extremely confident."

Of full back Thuram, Jacquet said: "It's a reward for his hard work and the mental discipline that he's been able to instil into this French team."

Thuram scored seconds after Davor Suker had opened the scoring shortly after halftime. He added his second in the 70th minute, shortly before Blanc was sent off.

Croatian coach Miroslav Blazevic said: "I must say that France deserved their win but if we had been more careful we could have reached the final.

"They reacted very well after we had scored our goal. When they levelled, they found strength and our team did not have any more."

"France are a very compact team and I wish them luck."

Croatia's Robert Jarni said: "I am very proud. It was a really tough, hard, man's game of soccer tonight."

French captain Didier Deschamps said of Thuram: "He saved us today. He was extraordinary as always. The player of this World Cup is not necessarily a forward, it can be a defender. Marcel Desailly has been great as well.

"Luckily the equaliser came straight away as otherwise it would have been very difficult for us. We didn't have time to think about being behind and that goal removed all our doubts.

"The ref did not seem to be sure himself (about the sending-off). It was an exaggerated reaction, the referee did not have the right to deprive him (Blanc) of the final."

"This is truly one of the greatest days in the history of French sport," said French President Jacques Chirac.

"I would like to pay particular homage to Thuram who was extraordinary and to a team which was fantastic, truly fantastic - a wonderful moment," he said.

WE BEAT OURSELVES, SAYS STIMAC

They tried to keep their heads high. Yet, as Croatian players came out of the dressing rooms, there was a look of deep disappointment in their eyes.

Croatia let a 1-0 lead slip away and crashed out of the World Cup semi-final with a 2-1 defeat against host France on Wednesday.

"We beat ourselves," said defender Igor Stimac. "We gave away the goals as gifts to France."

Still, it was a magnificent achievement for the small nation of 4.8 million people, which in the quarter-finals knocked out Germany, which has 6 million registered players, with a 3-0 victory.

"The only difference was that this time we could not hold our lead even two minutes. Had we managed to hold the lead for a little while."

Davor Suker fired his fifth goal of the tournament 26 seconds into the second half. But defender Lilian Thuram replied just a minute later and then clinched it in the 70th.

"We gave our maximum. We scored the goal and we were already in the final," said Suker. "But we conceded the equalizer too early.

"We really wanted to play the final, but now we have to concentrate and try to be third."

Defender Slaven Bilic, who was slammed in the face by French defender Laurent Blanc to earn the Frenchman a red card and give Croatia a man advantage for the last 20 minutes, also felt his team had the victory in its hands.

"We had a fantastic opportunity. Everything was going the way we predicted before the match," he said.

"If we had been able to hold on to our lead for just five minutes ... their fans would have been down, the French team would have been down. We didn't pressure them enough.

"I felt the way we played, they wouldn't be able to score all night. They were tiring, they had two matches with extra time behind them. But then we made a stupid mistake," he said.

On the first goal, Thuram robbed Croatian captain Zvonimir Boban of the ball on the edge of the penalty area just before scoring.

Boban was later substituted, suffering from a muscle injury that he took into the game.

"My leg was really hurting and I wasn't ready to play tonight," said Boban.

Coach Miroslav Blazevic said France in the end deserved the victory.

"With a little bit more caution, we could have been the lucky ones. At halftime, we thought the French were without strength. I thought we would win.

"We scored and then the worst thing in soccer happened - we conceded a goal in the same minute," Blazevic said.

"I think we can be really proud of what we achieved in this World Cup. But still I can't get rid of the impression that we could have done more."

FRANCE 98

CROATIA V HOLLAND

Compiled by ABSW

CROATIA CONFIRMS ITS CLASS

SIX-GOAL SUKER UNDERLINES A REAL PEDIGREE

This was no ordinary third-place playoff. What we saw was one side brimming with desire and still very keen, despite being knocked out, to prove to the world that they are a potential force. That country was of course Croatia, as they enthusiastically beat a subdued Netherlands 2-1, thus claiming a creditable third in the world.

"We are a small country in our first World Cup and we came in third," said Suker later.

Riding a brilliant counter-attack and the acrobatics of goalkeeper Drazen Ladic, Croatia had a memorable tournament. After upsetting the Dutch, star striker Davor Suker, with six goals for the tournament, ran around Parc des Princes with a Croatian flag draped on his shoulders.

He and his teammates, arms locked, jumped up and down on the victory stand. They earned their moment of glory as the most successful outsider of France '98, with the best finish by a newcomer since Portugal was third in 1966.

"What we demonstrated is a small and perhaps unknown country is able to show with great elegance what it is capable of," coach Miroslav Blazevic said. "For us, the most important thing was winning this game. We wanted to be the third best team in the world."

The Dutch were disappointing in the consolation match.

"We had so many chances and we were not able to take advantage of them," Marc Overmars said. "We made a lot of mistakes."

The Netherlands played its usual attacking style, only to be foiled throughout by Ladic's saves.

In a span of a minute late in the game, he made spectacular saves on Patrick Kluivert and Clarence Seedorf to protect the lead.

"I did my best for my country and my teammates," said Ladic, who has been known to let his thoughts wander during games.

"If he is not the best keeper in the world," captain Zvonimir Boban said, "then he is one of the top three. When he puts his mind to it, he is the best. He made some great saves on the Dutch team."

The French fans in the sellout crowd booed Slaven Bilic every time he touched the ball but Bilic played an outstanding game, seeming to enjoy the attention.

The Dutch pushed forward at every opportunity, and the Croats displayed their superb counter-attacking skills all night. The 20-5 edge in shots at goal showed the Netherlands' superiority in possession.

On both first-half goals, Croatia used quick breaks. Suker supplied a perfect through pass to Robert Jarni in the 13th minute and Jarni faked a defender before finding Prosinecki. His right-footed shot from 10 yards found the net.

"It was a great passing play," said Prosinecki, who played for Yugoslavia in the 1990 World Cup (when there was no Croatia). "When I got the chance, I knew I had to score."

The Netherlands drew level with a solo move by Boudewijn Zenden nine minutes later. Zenden scooted from right wing to midfield and stopped on a dime to send a left-footed bullet home off goalkeeper Ladic's hands.

Ladic made two sliding kick saves on Kluivert before Suker made it 2-1. He took a pass from playmaker Boban for a 20-yard shot through the legs of defender Jaap Stam and into the far corner. Totally fooled, goalkeeper Edwin van der Sar sat on the grass and could only shrug as the Croats celebrated in the 36th minute.

If there was one good thing to come out of the terrible Balkans conflict, it was Croatia's emergence as a possible new power in Europe. And leading the Croatian revolution is Davor Suker — six goals and bags of respect, coupled with tons of national pride from a side brimming with confidence, class and skill. Croatia to win Euro 2000? You bet!

PARIS: THIRD-PLACE PLAYOFF

CROATIA	2
HOLLAND	1

Bergkamp and Stimac (above) and below the victorious Croatians who finished third in the World Cup.

Prosinecki scores for Croatia.

WHAT THEY SAID ...

Compiled by ABSW

CROATIA SAVOURS ITS SUCCESS

FORTUNE FAVOURS BRAVE, SAYS BLAZEVIC

Croatian coach Miroslav Blazevic said his team was lucky to beat the Netherlands 2-1 and take third place in their first World Cup.

"We had just a few chances to score today," he said. "We had a lot of luck as well.

"But fortune favours the brave and my team was very brave today.

"We couldn't play an open game against the Dutch but our counter-attacks were very effective."

Croatian defender Igor Stimac said he and his team-mates could not wait to get back to their home country to celebrate their highly creditable third place in the World Cup finals.

"We've heard a lot about the atmosphere at home," he said. "We're really looking forward to it. We can't wait to get home."

Stimac said the team had put behind them their semi-final defeat to France. "There's been a lot of tears shed in the last three days but we managed to concentrate on this and we've beaten a very good Dutch team," he said.

"Suker's goal was a masterpiece. I hope he goes on to be top scorer," he said of Davor Suker's winner which put the Croatian striker top of the scorers' table with six goals for the tournament before the final.

Asked about the spectacular saves of keeper Drazen Ladic, Stimac said: "If he's not the best in the world, he's certainly in the top three and when he puts his mind to it, he is the best."

DUTCH FOCUS ON TRANSFERS

Dutch goalscorer Boudewijn Zenden said: "We should have beaten them, we played the better football. But it shows it's not only good football that wins World Cups.

"It's a pity we didn't get third. It was a very frustrating evening. We should have been walking around here with our bronze medals."

Dutch midfielder Ronald de Boer, who sat out the match on the substitutes' bench, noted: "It was very difficult for us after they scored. Maybe our concentration wasn't the best.

"They were very smart. They waited and made just two or three chances and scored with two of them.

"We knew they would be defensive. Maybe we tried too hard to score. We forgot to defend, we were too impatient."

However while Croatia was celebrating, no sooner had the Netherlands ended its World Cup campaign than the thoughts of some of its squad moved on to the next priority - a move to a new club.

The De Boer twins had kept silent on their intentions for next season throughout the tournament. Ronald had declined to comment while Dutch captain Frank only remarked that he would be staying at Ajax Amsterdam.

Ronald's desire to get away has been no secret but on Saturday after the third place play-off defeat to Croatia, Frank confirmed he too wished to leave Amsterdam.

"In principle, I want to go," he said.

Frank's stock has clearly risen during the finals. He has barely put a foot wrong and on Friday was chosen for a notional world squad. Frank's old boss Louis van Gaal at Barcelona is believed to be interested in signing him.

"I'm certainly happy with how I've played this tournament," he said.

His problem will be persuading Ajax to part with him. He and his brother have contracts until 2004.

As for Ronald, his stance appears to have hardened. "No, I will not be playing for Ajax anymore. I want to go elsewhere," he said.

He added his preference was for English champions Arsenal whose recent offer was turned down by Ajax.

Dutch striker Patrick Kluivert is also weighing up his options for next year. After what he has described as a terrible year at AC Milan, he appears the keenest of the Dutch squad to move.

English clubs Arsenal and Tottenham Hotspur have both expressed interest. On Saturday, Kluivert added Manchester United to the list although he acknowledged he still had to persuade his current paymasters to let him go.

"I think I'm going to leave but not for sure. The decision will be very difficult. I'll look at what the trainer wants to do and if it agrees with my way of playing football, that'll be the key," he said.

The Dutch league, already stripped of much of its talent, will be even poorer this autumn. Of the current Dutch squad of 22, 12 currently play outside the Netherlands and at least five more are set to join them next season.

Only three - Wim Jonk, who has already played for Inter Milan, keeper Edwin van der Sar and defender Andre Ooijer, a late replacement in the squad - have expressed no desire to leave.

FRANCE 98

FRANCE v BRAZIL

Compiled by ABSW

HAIL KING ZI-ZI AND HIS FRENCH REVOLUTIONARIES

Zidane shows his true class as Brasil gets stage fright

It was hard to believe this was Brazil playing in a final. In a high-scoring finale to France 98 it was the French who who showed all the style, scoring with panache and denying Brazil's traditional elan with an incessant pressure game which was a tribute to their fitness and commitment.

It ended 3-0 to the French. In reality, it could have been 5-0!

However much of the pre-match interest was in the bizarre behaviour of the Brazilians. They failed to take the Stade de France pitch for a pre-match warm-up surrounding rumours concerning Ronaldo's fitness and a dressing room bust-up.

Despite announcements to the contrary before the game Ronaldo did play, although he never looked fit, and struggled along with the rest of his teammates.

In fact, Ronaldo had gone to hospital for a scan on an ankle injury and had been passed fit to play just 45 minutes before the kick-off. Manager Zagallo didn't include him on his first teamsheet, but was able to change the line-up just before the FIFA deadline.

Whether this was deliberate obfuscation or a genuine problem, whatever it was it backfired badly as Brazil started slowly and never recovered once King Zi-Zi got to work.

Guivarc'h missed the first real chance of the match when he moved onto a neat through-ball from Zidane but only managed to stab the ball to keeper Taffarel.

But France eventually took the lead after 27 minutes when Arsenal's Emmanuel Petit sent in a corner from the right (given away by Roberto Carlos), and Zidane rose majestically to head home.

At the other end, Rivaldo saw a header from a corner saved, but Brazil struggled to string passes together and looked a shadow of their normal selves.

They could so easily have gone 2-0 down when Petit's right-foot volley was deflected agonisingly wide of the left-hand upright. And then, on the stroke of half-time, Guivarc'h found himself completely through on goal after a defensive error – but his hesitant finish was turned around the post by a relieved Taffarel.

The world champions must have thought they had escaped. But they were left dumbstruck in first-half injury time when Zidane headed home from a left-wing corner to leave the French completely in control.

It really should have been three-nil to France at the break, perhaps even more, such was their dominance.

Coach Zagallo decided enough was enough and threw $40m rated winger Denilson into the fire at the start of the second-half in place of the ineffective Leonardo.

The South Americans started to show more urgency and Ronaldo came close to pulling a goal back for the world champions 10 minutes after the restart. Denilson's mazy run was abruptly ended by Christian Karembeu's trip 25-yards from goal.

As everyone in the crowd waited for a Roberto Carlos special, the wing-back took the ball short down the left channel and hit a cross to the far post which Ronaldo was allowed to control and hit goalwards, but Barthez saved on the line.

Guivarc'h should have wrapped the match up for the hosts eight minutes later when a blunder in the box by Brazil's captain Dunga gave the unmarked striker a free shot at Taffarel, but he ballooned his shot over the bar.

Brazil were given a further boost when France were reduced to 10 men with 22 minutes left on the clock. Marcel Desailly walked after he was shown a second yellow card for a scything challenge on Cafu.

In a last desperate throw of the dice Zagallo brought on Fiorentina striker Edmundo, who was earlier named in the starting line-up in Ronaldo's place, to try and save his side's world crown. But he made little impact.

France's shot-shy strikers wasted another golden opportunity to settle the nerves of the home crowd after 82 minutes. Substitute Christophe Dugarry ran on to a defence-splitting pass from Zidane, but with Taffarel floundering on his line the big forward pulled his shot woefully wide from 15-yards. Further drama unfolded in injury time as Denilson almost clawed Brazil back into the game when he hit the bar, but France clinched victory thanks to the Arsenal connection of Patrick Vieira and Petit.

Substitute Vieira nudged his fellow Double winning teammate Petit through on goal and the midfield star dispatched a sweet shot past Taffarel and into the right-hand corner of the net from just inside the box to send Paris into a frantic frenzy of wild celebration.

The French had done what many simply believed was impossible: win the world crown.

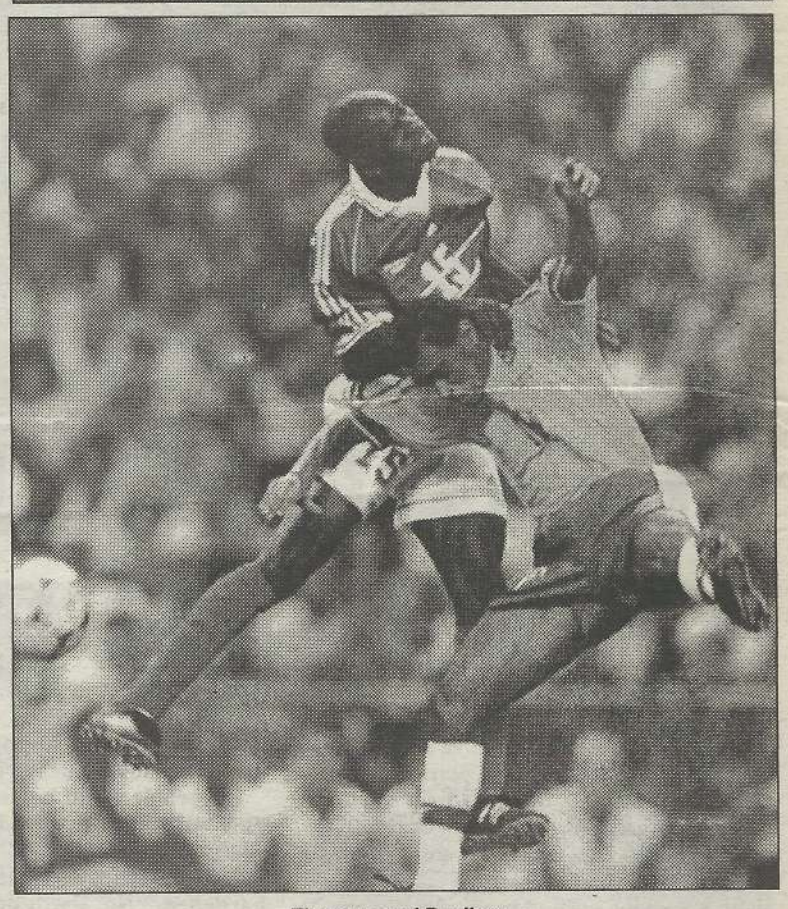
What this does to this nation not normally associated with Soccer fanaticism is anyone's guess, but one thing is for sure. The party will be like no other in the streets of France. In fact, when you read this on Tuesday here in Australia, le party will have just begun.

The King is dead. Long live the King. France are the new world champions.

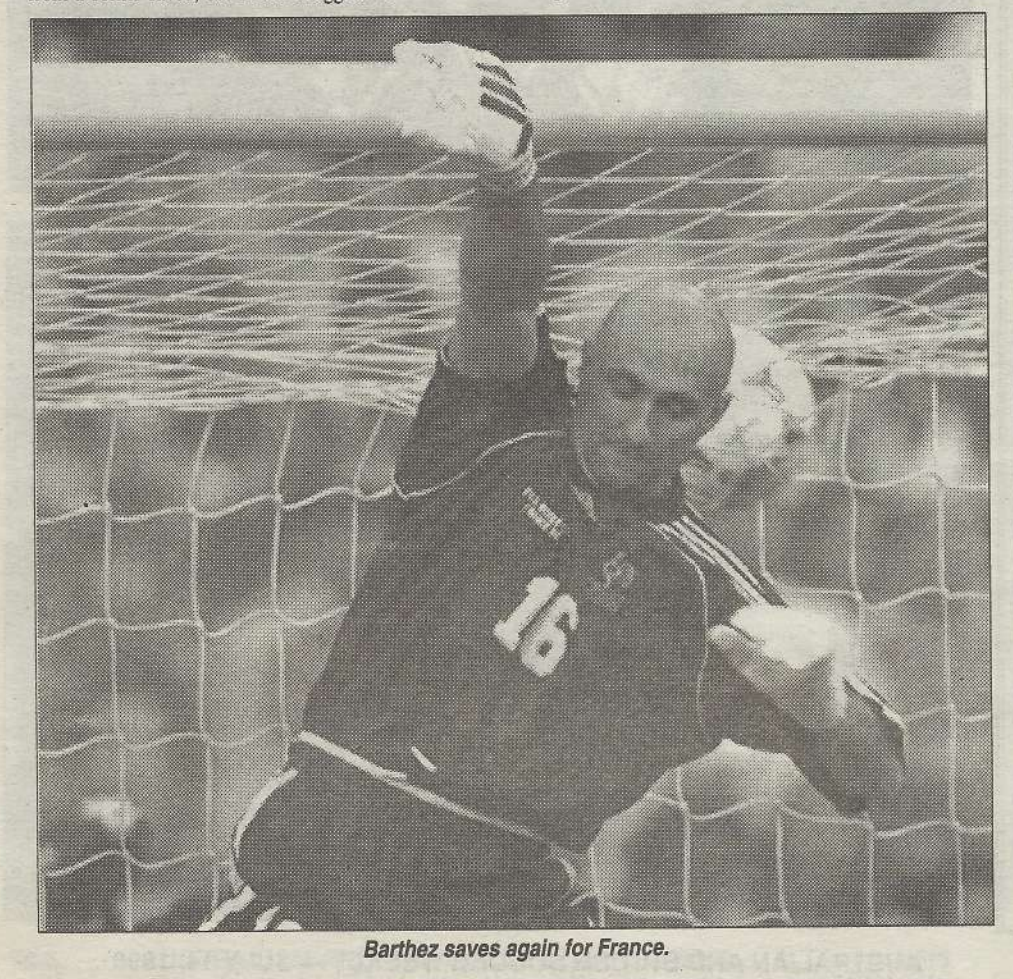
Who would have believed it.

ST. DENIS: WORLD CUP FINAL

FRANCE	3
BRAZIL	0



Thurman and Denilson



Barthez saves again for France.

Brazil: 1-Taffarel; 2-Cafu, 4-Junior Baiano, 3-Aldair, 6-Roberto Carlos; 8-Dunga (captain), 5-Cesar Sampaio (21-Edmundo 74), 10-Rivaldo, 18-Leonardo (19-Denilson 46); 9-Ronaldo, 20-Bebeto

Bookings: Junior Baiano 34

France: 16-Fabien Barthez; 15-Lilian Thuram, 8-Marcel Desailly, 18-Franck Leboeuf, 3-Bixente Lizarazu; 19-Christian Karembeu (14-Alain Boghossian 57), 7-Didier Deschamps (captain) 10-Zinedine Zidane, 17-Emmanuel Petit, 6-Youri Djorkaeff (4-Patrick Vieira 76); 9-Stephane Guivarc'h (21-Christophe Dugarry 66)

Bookings: Didier Deschamps 38, Marcel Desailly 48, Christian Karembeu 56

Sent-off: Marcel Desailly 68 (second booking)

Referee: Said Belqola (Morocco)

Attendance: 80,000

Scores: Zidane 27, 45 Petit 90

Petit and Rivaldo.

FRANCE 98 WORLD CUP FINAL

Compiled by ABSW

FRANCE'S BASTILLE DAY TO REMEMBER

Scenes reminiscent of Liberation Day 1944. Magnifique!

France exploded into a nationwide street party on Sunday after its team's 3-0 victory over Brazil in the World Cup final.

In scenes probably not witnessed since Liberation Day in 1944, millions swarmed into the streets to dance, sing and wave red, white and blue French flags.

More than one million people packed into the Champs Elysees to celebrate what most French fans had hardly conceived possible when the World Cup finals started a month ago.

The elegant avenue leading to the Arc de Triomphe, erected by Napoleon to commemorate famous French victories, was a mass of humanity drinking in one of the great moments of their lives.

"We are going to party right to the end of the century," said a youth called Momo.

"It is the best day of my life. I just want to kiss everyone," Parisian Philippe Girard said.

Car horns blared, church bells rang and people danced in fountains across a nation which may not go to bed before Bastille Day, the national holiday which begin today (Tuesday).

"We are the champions, we are the champions," they chanted, or more simply "We've won, we've won."

Others yelled "Zidane for President," honoring World Cup hero Zinedine Zidane who scored two of France's three goals.

"We would never have believed a 3-0 win. We are not going to sleep tonight. In two days it is the 'fete nationale'. We are not going to work," said Ced from Marseilles.

France is traditionally reserved about soccer and its fans were urged by the team to liven up in the stadiums.

But the nation has surprised commentators with the outpouring of joy over its soccer success and intellectuals are already talking about the victory changing the face of France.

"We are full of emotion. I just can't explain what it feels like," said one young supporter, Marcel Aglae.

"We have shown what we are capable of. If we carry on like that everything will be much better," said unemployed Parisian Herve Verite. "We know what we can do now."

"Everyone loves each other," French actor Gerard Depardieu told French television.

The few Brazilians still out in the street were embracing French fans, while leftover fans from other countries - from as far away as Denmark, South Africa and Mexico — were happy to celebrate with the locals.

"We are going to party all the way through to Bastille Day," Mexican Jose Luis Velez said.

The celebrations were mostly good-natured. Outside the mayor's residence, the Hotel de Ville, several people who had apparently fainted were carried out of the crowd by police.

Thousands had packed into the square next to the Hotel de Ville to watch the match on a giant screen, some climbing lamposts or clambering onto newspaper kiosks to see the game.

Some 3,530 police had been called up to patrol areas around the four giant TV screens in Paris, the metro system and the Champs Elysees. Hundreds more were sent to the futuristic Stade de France just to the north of the capital where the match was played.

For the French, the partying began early in Paris' sleepy suburbs, too.

"We've won. We've won. Wake up! Wake up!" a group of young people shouted in the western suburb of Maisons-Laffitte, dancing down the street.

Small children raced around balconies in their pajamas, and firecrackers lit up the night sky.

Such is the power of the Global Game.

★★★

The World Cup itself is a 15-pound piece of 18-carat gold that resembles an oversized ice cream cone. In spirit, the cup is beyond measure.

And on Sunday, following a 3-0 victory over mighty Brazil in the World Cup final, the spirit of France was soaring.

The country had its first World Cup title and a jolt of glory so potent it propelled millions into the streets from Paris to the tiniest of villages.

In a decidedly French flourish, 300 top models paraded in Yves Saint Laurent gowns to Ravel's Bolero played on steel drums before the game.

"We have shown what we are capable of. If we carry on like that everything will be much better," said unemployed Parisian Herve Verite. "We know what we can do now."

Afterward, the jolt of Zinedine Zidane's two goals still reverberating, a pageant of sound and lights with a dazzling burst of fireworks filled the stadium sky.

Since Friday, a two-day tailgate party threaded through Paris, with pockets of nonstop gaiety. French flags fluttered from car windows and above bicycles. Crowds chanted, "We're in the finals," but hardly anyone risked the traditional, "We're going to win."

On Sunday, a crowd gathered eight hours early by a big screen and yelled itself hoarse. Strangers smiled and high-fived. Repeatedly, they chanted, "If you're proud to be French, clap your hands." Everyone clapped.

Brazilians were everywhere. At least 30,000 who came from home were joined by Brazilian residents in Europe and unofficial Brazilians at heart.

Five hours before the match, the open areas around spaceship Stade de France were alive with noise and color.

Dabibo Daniel and his friend, Tilo Batilo, both wearing yellow shirts, spread a Brazilian flag on the ground and performed a voodoo rite. "Ronaldo, Ronaldo," they intoned.

Nearby, under a blur waving blue-white-red flags, young women wearing abbreviated cancan outfits in crimson sequins toasted bare shoulders in the sun.

A group of painted French fans brandished a confused and angry rooster, a symbol of France, who was clearly no soccer lover.

If a potential for terrorism hung in the air, it spoiled nothing. Policemen putted by on scooters. Riot troops strolled among fans, with only soft caps and sidearms instead of their usual combat gear.

Although heavily outnumbered, the Brazilians won the pregame fans' World Cup.

Some Frenchmen came in full war paint and elaborate costumes, with floppy tricolor hats. But most wore fashionable black or ordinary street clothes, with only blue-red streaks on their cheeks. They yelled, a little self-consciously.

The Brazilians, however, ablaze in their colors, shouted and undulated to tambourines or drums.

Several defectors left the French side when Karina Ramos of Rio de Janeiro sambaed past wearing only skimpy shorts and dabs of yellow and green where her top should be.

A carnival group from Recife in fanciful costumes danced through the crowds under a colorful feathered canopy. Brazilians and Frenchmen alike partied in the wake of music trailing behind.

France, badly in need of grandeur and troubled by racial strife, found itself unified by a multiracial team.

The team had triumphed just by reaching the final. And despite outrage over ticket distribution and police street battles with hooligans, the tournament was a clear success.

Pele, the soccer great working as a commentator for Brazil's Globo television network, declared France a worthy champion.

"Brazil did not perform as expected and the cup is in good hands. France deserves the title," he said.

On the field, and in spirit.

Well said. Vive La France.

WORLD CUP FINAL

THE PROTAGONISTS

Compiled by ABSW

ZIDANE: A MIGRANT'S TALE

The success of Zinedine Zidane is the sort of story Australia, and in particular the new-right political forces, should examine closely.

On Sunday, he became a testimonial to how much a sport can change a nation: Two goals on a picture-perfect evening and all of a sudden, France was at his feet. The same France that, three decades earlier, barely let in his Algerian father.

When this World Cup began, the French said they would never lavish their interest and affection on a game, especially one so strongly rooted in the working class. But as the clock pushed the 64th and final game of the tournament toward its stunning conclusion - France 3, Brazil 0 — all pride and pretense dissolved and a few hundred years of Gallic reserve spilled into the streets of Paris in the form of wild celebrations.

The moment it ended, the man who uncorked all this jubilation held his shirt in both hands, pressed the jersey of "Les Bleus" to his lips, and kissed it. Then the 25-year-old Zidane, who learned to play the game on the narrow streets in the tough Castellane section of Marseilles, kissed his teammates and, finally, the gold trophy itself.

Much of the buildup heading into the final was on the glittering stars sprinkled through the roster of four-time champion Brazil: Ronaldo, Rivaldo, Roberto Carlos, Denilson.

"But we proved that we have great players, too," French coach Aime Jacquet said with a nod toward Zidane.

If the outcome was unlikely, Zidane's pivotal role in it was not. It was the way he scored both goals that was unusual.

"Zidane - with his head - who would have thought that?" Jacquet said.

Zidane's magic was supposed to be in his feet.

His remarkable dribbling skills were honed as a kid by playing on a concrete path about 150 yards long and 15 feet wide. It was the one spot in the neighborhood that he and his friends could call their own.

"A field to play on? That was too much to ask for," Zidane recalled not long ago, after signing a multimillion-dollar deal with the legendary Italian club, Juventus.

Still, those games prepared him well. Zidane's talent was evident by age 13, when he left Marseille and apprenticed in the youth program at Cannes. Three years after that, he made his debut in France's First Division, playing against men. Soon he was bought by a bigger club in Bordeaux.

By 1996, he had grown too expensive for France, leaving his country to join Juventus.

In many ways, his career paralleled that of Michel Platini, the former French star who was president of the World Cup organizing committee. Both were sons of immigrants, and Platini, from an Italian family in the Lorraine region, also learned the game playing in the streets.

Platini, too, starred at Juventus, and like Zidane, came into a World Cup shouldering the hopes of an entire nation.

But Sunday night, they parted company in this sense — as much as Platini was lionized, a fickle French sporting public has always reserved its biggest ovations for winners. And with the exception of a Davis Cup and a world handball title, its champions have always been individuals: Olympic gold medal skier Jean-Claude Killy, Tour de France cyclist Bernard Hinault, and race car driver Alain Prost.

But this win will make luminaries of Zidane and his teammates long after the warm summer night celebration along the Champs-Elysees plays itself out.

"It was the first time France is world champion, so it has to be extraordinary," he said. "It's incredible. There are no words."

For him, perhaps not. For the rest of France, there will be plenty.

Earlier in the week, as the nation gathered up the team in an increasingly public embrace, it began to notice how much the players reflected the changing faces of a France struggling to absorb wave after wave of immigrants. In addition to traditional Frenchmen Emmanuel Petit and Laurent Blanc, "Les Bleus" featured blacks, including defenders Marcel Desailly and Lilian Thuram, who were born in Ghana and Guadeloupe; and "beurs," as North African immigrant families like Zidane's are known.

As the team's bandwagon made room for more people, so did the definition of what it meant to be French.

Zinedine Zidane ... son of Algerian immigrants.

DID RONALDO CRACK UNDER THE PRESSURE?

Can you imagine the weight of expectation of a Soccer-obsessed nation like Brazil? Imagine being compared to Pele? And imagine you are only 21? He has the world at his feet but perhaps it has all become a bit too much for Ronaldo.

The striker's teammates said they suspected Brazil's superstar may have cracked emotionally hours before the biggest game of his life, the World Cup final.

"I think it was emotional," said fullback Roberto Carlos, who has been Ronaldo's roommate during Brazil's 55-day stay in France. "Ronaldo made an effort to play but he was down.

"At about 4 p.m., he suddenly got ill. It was like a malaise had come over him.

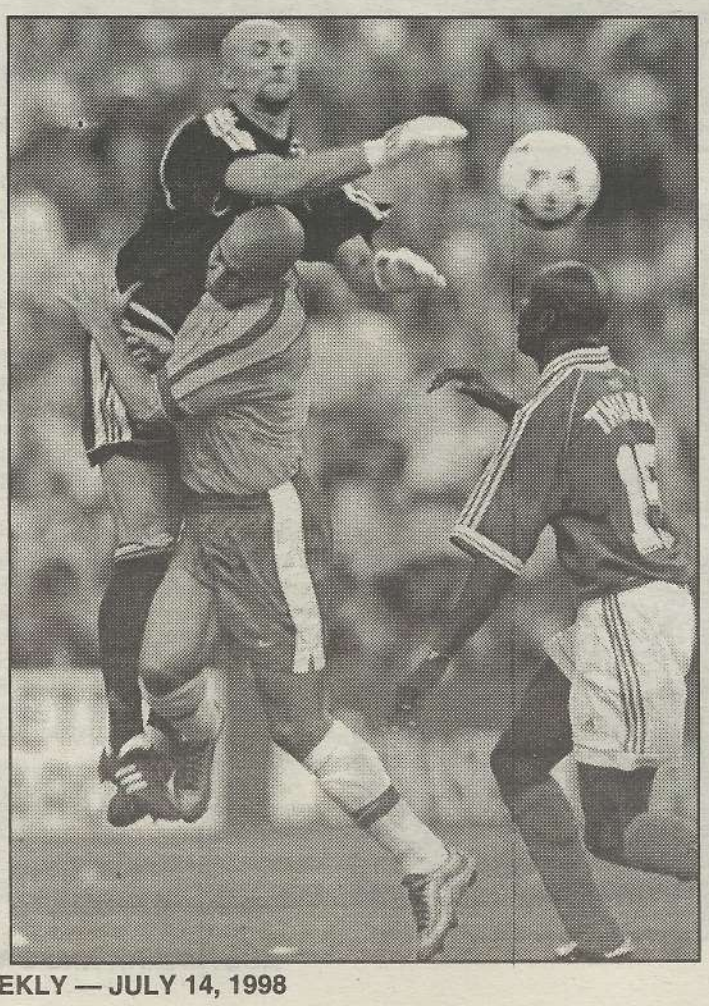
"It was strange. He's 21 years old, he gets millonaire contracts. It was obvious that this could happen to him. Unfortunately it happened on the day of the World Cup final."

Coach Mario Zagallo revealed after Brazil's shock 3-0 defeat — the worst in the country's World Cup history — that Ronaldo had been unwell and should not have played, but was included because of the psychological effect on the team his absence could have.

Team doctor Lidio Toledo said Brazil's best player had felt unwell with a stomach upset two hours after he ate lunch on Sunday, but Zagallo said he was included in the team after making "a dramatic improvement."

Team spokesman Nelson Borges nodded his head when asked if Ronaldo had vomited and said Ronaldo had eaten exactly the same food as the rest of the squad.

This contrasted to an official statement issued by organizers at the Stade de France that said Ronaldo had passed a late fitness test on an injured ankle.



It said he had not trained fully for two days and had hospital tests on the ankle before being declared fit to play 45 minutes before kickoff. Organisers originally handed out teamsheets with Ronaldo on the substitutes' bench but this was later corrected.

Sunday's incidents came at the end of a World Cup at which the goofy-grinned 21-year-old has learned the true price of fame.

He scored four goals in Brazil's first six games and played brilliantly in patches, but despite all this was widely dismissed as a disappointment.

Certainly, his performance did not lifted him into the same class as players such as Pele, Diego Maradona, Garrincha and Johan Cruyff, something he had been expected to achieve.

Only a few years ago, Ronaldo had to abandon playing for Flamengo's youth team in Rio de Janeiro because he could not afford the train fare to the ground. It cost around five cents each way.

Now, he is the world's best-paid soccer player, raking in millions from his club Inter Milan and his publicity contracts.

But after two years of non-stop soccer — he spent the 1996 European close season at the Atlanta Olympics and 1997 at the Copa America in Bolivia - publicity and hype, Ronaldo has given signs of burning out.

"I have a wife and my family, I have my children but he doesn't have any of this, he doesn't have the support I can count on," said Roberto Carlos. "I hope he goes back to Brazil and has a good rest.

"We need now to leave this boy alone."

WORLD CUP
ANALYSIS & COMMENT

Roy Hay
ABSW contributing writer

Les bleus mervielleuses sont des champions du monde. After a pulsating final, the host country has won the World Cup, whose foundation owed everything to Jules Rimet.

Among the many curiosities of this tournament, this must be the first time since the knock-out stages were introduced that a team has won the Cup without a single goal in open play by a recognised forward.

France's triumph was based on a fluid and brilliantly organised midfield which strangled every opponent and yet provided virtually all of the team's creative play. The team with the best defence won the tournament as France only conceded two goals, one to Denmark and one to Croatia, apart from the penalty shoot-out against Italy. It was total football without forwards!

Brazil was obviously thrown out of its stride by the Ronaldo matter before the start of the final and his lack of impact in the game.

For someone who set a goal of beating Just Fontaine's scoring record in the World Cup finals, it was a sad way to bow out. But his colleagues and his coach could find no answer to France's midfield dominance.

I wrote in the my Geelong Advertiser column about how the television cameras mislead because they tend to show only one or two players and the challenges in which they are involved.

If we could only see the game through the eyes of the player on the ball facing the French midfield as his options are swiftly and systematically removed then we would appreciate far more the skills involved.

Behind them lay the best back four in the tournament and even when the inspirational Lauren Blanc was removed, Frank Lebouef played one of the most disciplined games of his life in the final.

The other French substitutes also played their part, and here Aime Jacquet's use of the whole of his squad in earlier matches looks like shrewd planning, though at the time I feared this might be a repeat of what happened to Croatia at Euro 96 when it lost momentum after a fielding a reserve team against the Portuguese.

Croatia had an outstanding tournament, despite being without one of its leading strikers in Alen Boksic, with the exemplary Davor Suker making and taking most of the chances which came his way, and deservedly winning the golden boot.

The aging midfield of Asanovic, Prosinecki and Boban, reinforced now and again by younger legs, managed to play together effectively for the most part, and certainly when it mattered.

It is doubtful if the next generation is quite as gifted and Croatian expectations have been raised to what may turn out to be unsustainable levels, but France 98 has been a wonderful tournament for the new nation.

Holland leaves Paris with its record intact of being one of the best teams never to win the ultimate prize. It provided some stunning moments, including Bergkamp's winner against Argentina, and a level of all round play and skill which was often breathtaking. Its semi-final against Brazil was a classic to be savoured and it was sad that Holland could not maintain that form into the third-place match, when it just fell below its best level.

The tournament as a whole was very enjoyable, not perhaps "the best world cup ever" (Johnny Warren) but an intriguing and enjoyable one which will provide lessons for the tournaments of the new millennium. Roll on Euro 2000, the Sydney Olympics and South Korea and Japan in 2002.

Suker excellent

Stuart Jones
ABSW contributing writer

And I thought all the fairytales had left the World Cup. After watching the English side go out to penalties, the Danes lose out in the end to Brazil, the Italians go out on penalties and the Dutch the same, then Croatia sparked a light by taking out third place in a fanastic game.

Looking back it may have been an indication of things to come but I, for one, did not see it. How desperately I wanted someone new to take out the World Cup but how I felt it would not happen this time around.

Brazil on the day were not good enough, the excuese will pass but the French hold the World Cup and good on them. France deserved the cup in reality. The final may have been one sided but it was better than the previous two finals. To say such a victory could be dampened by being played on home soil shows the person is too unbiased to bother making comment. Someone must play at home. This World Cup has had all the drama that we need – and a worthy victor.

I must disagree with FIFA that the World Cup is too long, games of this quality we can never get enough. Instead I have one suggestion for the future. As in previous World Cups I would have two group stages. Yes that would add 12 extra games, but it is only one extra week. I would play the top two of each group in four groups of four with the winners going into the semis. It would really sort out the top teams.

As for now we reflect upon the glory that was France 98. Thankyou SBS you did lift your game, Andy Harper got better towards the final once he had some decent sidekicks like Nick Theodorakopoulos and Robbie Slater – they are great media men of the future. Maybe it is time for a new wave of young men to take over the coverage, although I think Harps has some way to go yet.

Overall this has been a fantastic experience, well done to Africa for their contribution, albeit stunted in Round Two, also South American sides did very well. Europe dominated once more, but Asia has a long way to go – don't believe the hype of the host broadcaster that Europe will continue to dominate for some time with one or two South American sides also up there.

Which leaves one interesting stat the two undefeated sides from qualifiers all the way to the World Cup final itself were France and Australia.

Vive la France - well done lads the dream for so many others has been rekindled once more.

Andy Harper

Dwyght Tuffnell
ABSW Melbourne correspondent

Host nation France's stunning 3-0 victory over Brazil in the final brought to an end the sixteenth World Cup, leaving us another four years to wait for a next one.

Their win took the Cup back to Europe, making it the first host to win since Argentina since 1978.

Their destruction of favourites Brazil, with the scoreline that should have been bigger was a change from the poor finals of 1990 and 94.

Although their progress through the knock-out round had been a little shaky, their football was particularly good and, perhaps with a striker who can finish, they would've gone through without having to win on penalties and goals on goals.

Now that it is all over, was it such a good World Cup?

The quality of the football reasonable, and again, apart from Brazil and Argentina, it was dominated by the Europeans.

The challenge from Africa and Asia was extremely disappointing and it will be a long time that a team from these two continents take out the Cup.

Inconsistent refereeing and unbelievably poor sportsmanship have been low lights from the Cup.

The clampdown from the tackle from behind only created more problems. Endless shirt-tugging will have to be the next things stamped out, and it made much of the viewing ugly.

Diving and over-reactions to the slightest foul brought cheating to a new level at France 98.

Beckham send-off

SJ's STATS

GOALS 171 (45) AVG 2.7 PER GAME

	0-15	16-30	31-45	46-60	61-75	76-90	90-120
Tot 24	20	27	32	25	43	1	
Tot 14%	11%	16%	19%	15%	24%	1% avgs	
Ko (9)	(7)	(7)	(8)	(4)	(9)	(1)	

YCs 258 AVG 2 PER TEAM PER GAME

	0-15	16-30	31-45	46-60	61-75	76-90	90-120
Tot 19	44	47	47	45	52	4	
Tot 7%	17%	18%	18%	17%	20%	2% avgs	
Ko (5)	(10)	(19)	(16)	(11)	(13)	(4)	

RCs 22 - AVG 0.34 PER GAME

	0-15	16-30	31-45	46-60	61-75	76-90	90-120
Tot 0	3	3	4	6	6	0	
Tot 0%	14%	14%	18%	27%	27%	0%	avgs
Ko (0)	(0)	(1)	(1)	(3)	(1)	(0)	

Fouls = 2154 - 2.67 per mins (Ko 572 - 2.5mins)
Corners = 636 - 9.9 per game (Ko 173 - 10.8 p/g)
Subs = 337 = 2.6 per team per game (Ko 77 - 2.4 p/t p/g)
Offsides = 373 = 5.8 per game (Ko 104 - 6.5 p/g)

GOALS
Open Play = 108 - 63 % (31, 68%)
Corners = 21 - 12% (3, 6%)
Free Kicks = 21 - 12% (6, 13%)
Penalties = 17/18 - 10% (94 % conversion rate) (4/5 - 8%, 80% conversion rate)
Throw ins = 4 - 2% (1, 2%)

Goals touched by opponents before going in = 35 - 20% (6, 13%)

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